Tower of Karma
Ch 1-37

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The heaven inside hell

This world isn´t just.

If there are people that can casually sip their wine in their glasses, there are many others that need to drink muddy water that was stepped on. If there are people that can cover their body in warm furs, there are others that can only cover themselves with thin rags.

There is no happiness in this world.

In the moment people are born, they fall in different classifications. Children born from rich people, from poor people, noble children, peasant children, children of slaves. If you are born as a slave, life isn´t good even if you crawl out through it.

This world is cruel.

Someone´s happiness leads to someone´s unhappiness. For resources, people fight each other, steal and kill. To live is to dance over corpses. People become crazy and eat, rape, and kill.(TL note: Literally eat. Dunno what else to write there .-. 狂え、喰らえ、犯せ、殺せ。)

This world is hell.

☆

The kingdom of Arcadia. This kingdom whose name means utopia in the ancient

language had considerable power in comparison to its neighboring countries. This was the aggregation of their military power, their economy and the immensity of what they ´ve been accumulating during their history. It was the kingdom that had the most honorable origin among the seven kingdoms.

At its royal capital of Arkas, differently from their beautiful and well maintained places, there were also places that were dark and desolate. The people that lived there were dirty and the mood was stagnant. Most of the people living in places like that were slaves.

“Nee-san, Arlette-nee-san. I got bread from the church.”

“Ara, did you properly said thanks to them, my cute little boy?”

“Of course. And by the way, stop with that “boy” thing. I am nee-san´s knight after all.”

“Yes, yes. Then, let´s split the bread in two halves, my little knight.”

There were clear class distinctions in this nation. Generally speaking, the king would be the top, and then there would be the nobility, the normal citizens and the slaves. This was something unchanging, and in order to change your social class, you would need a large amount of money.

“Munch munch munch… It´s tasty, nee-san.”

“Yes, it is very tasty. We need to give our thanks to the priest later.”

The siblings were slaves. Right after giving birth to the little brother, their mother died, and because their mother was a prostitute, they didn´t know who their father was. Their little family was only the two of them.

“Tomorrow, I will go buy eggs with the money I saved up.”

“Then, let´s buy two of them with both of our money combined.”

Finishing to eat the bread made of kabi, they made their plans for tomorrow. It was already hard enough just to keep themselves alive. With both of their effort combined, they would work from morning to night, to then finally eat bread, drink water and have some very diluted soup. Sometimes, they would have the luxury to eat one egg. This was the quality of life of slaves.

“Now, let´s go sleep. Tomorrow we need to be up early, so we have to sleep when it is night.”

“Then, nee-chan, sing a song. I will go sleep too if you do that.”

“Yes, I will sing you a song.”

Even if it was only a little kid, as long as the kid was a slave, he would need to work. The view that child labor is something bad is something that has been created only recently. Children of farmers would help with the crops, children of merchants and of craftsmen would watch their parents doing their jobs, sometimes giving a try to that themselves, and would learn about it with time. The children of slaves would be included at society only as a form of labor force. Only privileged classes had access to education.

“Nee-san, the song!”

“Yes, yes.”

Putting down the small candle, the small family of only the two of them went to the small bed.With how the bed was so small to the point it felt to them like they would fall down from it if they didn´t hug each other and with them being covered by a very thin cloth that a bit of the cold wind would go through, the bed could be considered a bit too shabby to even be called a bed. But even so, the two were happy with that.

“Nee-san, it is so warm.” (TL note:¬¬)

“Forgive the robber. Forgive the thief. Forgive the murderer. Forgiveness has more value than anything; if you pray and look up to the sky, god will grant you forgiveness and compassion. Let´s forgive. Let´s forgive. Let´s forgive. My little treasure, love the beautiful world you were born in.”

While listening to the gentle song, the little brother could feel the warmth of his sister. He was hugging her tightly as if he wouldn´t let go no matter what. They were a family of only the two of them. That´s why he couldn´t let her go.

“Nee…-sa..n”

The sister was hugging her little brother that had fallen asleep as if he was a precious treasure.

“Good night, Al, my cute little treasure.”

Slaves were human. However, the world wouldn´t recognize them as people.

☆

“Don´t slack, little ones!”

An angry shout went flying through the construction site. The job of the slaves here was to transport materials. Children, which were cheap, were specially prefered for hiring for the simple labor jobs. Even if it was a job that required strength, it didn´t matter. If they passed out, it would be fine enough to just buy another one as the replacement.

“Hey, Al. Let´s meet at that same place at lunch break.”

“Alright. Until then, let´s both do our best, Kail.”

In the instant they passed by each other, in a low voice, they exchanged words. If they showed any signs of slacking even if for only an moment, their owner would have no problems in having them whipped. Slaves like them weren´t considered people.

“I should have told you already you are not to slack!”

As they carried their stones, another child was being whipped to their side.

☆

“Really, it would be nice if the next guy that buys me is a bit more gentle in dealing with his slaves.”

“For stuff like this job we are at, people get really rushed up because of the deadlines after all. Well, but if you are talking about rich old men in particular, nine out of ten… It would be [that], right?”

“Ah… [That thing] is really bad news. Just by thinking about that, my butthole starts to hurt.”

There were varied types of slaves. It was obvious that depending on their types, the person who bought them would have them do different jobs. That certain building company bought Al and Kail in order to finish the work they were contracted for. The construction had a set deadline, and now the were in a position they had to finish it in one go.

“If we are talking about ideal jobs, it should be the sort of thing like helping the guy with his personal assets, right?”(TL note: Apparently, slaves organizing your assets was a common thing in the ancient roman empire. Since the master can easily have his slave dead if something happens, it was safer to have a slave do this kind of job. I didn´t get this until somebody stated it in the comments, so I am just putting it here in case someone gets confused by that like me ^^)

“I don´t want that. I would need to be separated from nee-san in that case.”

“Here he comes; this siscon.”

“Shut up!”

Slaves didn´t have the privilege to choose their jobs; they would simply go to the place they were sold to. They were an existence that was there only to work. However, for the slave dealers, the mediators in the trades, there was a certain “situation” for the slaves that are easy to sell. While nobody wanted to be sold to a place like this one, a construction work that has a deadline set, if the slave wished for something in exchange for being sold to a place like that, it was more or less possible to have it granted. Al willingly accepted to be sold to a place like that just so that he could express his wish to the slave dealers. Everything was for the sake of him not being separated from his sister.

“Well, it´s weird though. Even though you are a slave, you are living in family.”

Kail was someone from a distant country. That country doesn´t exist anymore, and Kail

himself didn´t know if he used to have a family there or not. All he knew was that his country lost the war, he was abducted, was made into a slave, and now, was bought by someone here in Arcadia.

“Things like the whole family being bought together happens a lot of times.”

“That wasn´t the case for you guys though… It must be very harsh.” (TL note: I didn´t understand well what he was talking about…「お前はそれ以外だろうが……苦労しているだろうな」I guess he is talking about the siblings there (in particular his sister I guess?0.0) having to do the “harsh” works so that they can stay together.)

“I guess.”

“…I´m not talking about you.”

While saying that, Kail turned his eyes away from Al.

Tilting his head to the side in confusion, Al looked to another direction.

“She is late. She was supposed to be arriving by now.”

Al was anxiously looking around at the surroundings. However, he couldn´t catch sight of her.

“Sorry for the wait.”

A small rock hit Al at his head. The stone that was of about the size of a finger and it gave him more surprise than pain. Al staggered because of that. There was someone

standing on the stone wall.

“Havella? You are late.”

The person called Havella looked at both of them with apathetic eyes, which gave off a feeling that was very different from arrogance.

“Sorry. It took time to lose them.”

After saying that, the girl threw to each of them a red fruit.

“Oh, is that an apple? Thanks for the treat! Munch munch”(がじゅむしゃぐじゅ)

Although Havelia was giving a side-look at the two eating their apples furiously, she herself was eating her own apple with the same speed, though in a methodical and calm way. The eating speed of the lower classes was fast.

“Fuah, this brought me back to life. Thank you like always, Havella.”

Havella nodded silently to Al, who was expressing his thanks. Her attitude and movement felt very mechanical, but the two of them were somewhat able to understand her feelings even with that attitude. It wasn´t too long that they started to go along with Havella, but they were more or less able to understand her thoughts.

“But stealing things and so shouldn´t be so easy, right? We can eat apples like that, but maybe this isn´t really worth the risk.”

“There isn´t really any problem. If I am caught, I will only die and nothing more.”

“That is a problem, you know?”

Thievery was a crime. If she was caught, she wouldn´t be overlooked by only compensating for what she stole. She would be hit, be kicked, and she would be forever branded as a thief, having this documented in her ID for as long as she lived. This would be seen as a minus in various ways in her resume, and she also wouldn´t be looked at in the same way ever again.

“There are no problems on that. I am a pro after all.”

Havella wasn´t someone from this country. She was born here, but she was from a bandit family that came from far away from the east. Right after they illegally got inside the kingdom, Havella was born. And so, the kingdom wasn´t aware of Havella´s existence. She didn´t have the qualifications to be a citizen of the kingdom, and because of that, she didn´t have human rights. That was the only thing that was lower than being a slave. Even if it happened that she was killed, it wouldn´t have been different from someone just having killed some bug or animal.

“Well, you became a member of the thief guild this year. Their standards for that kind of thing are different after all.”

Without saying any words, Havella proudly puffed her chest. It seems that even thieves had pride in being skilled in what they do.

The thief guild was one of the secret guilds in this country. They were a professional group that would undertake shady work. If you were able to win some trust among them, it was possible for you to join them. There were many privileges and advantages in joining them, but at the same time, you needed to have a suitable amount of money to pay them to be able to join the group. Hamella´s parents and herself; all father, mother and daughter were part of the group.

“Because of that, we can have some apples, I guess. Gochisou.”(TL note: It´s that word japanese people say after they finished their meal for those that don´t know.)

Kail was the first to finish eating. After having finished to eat, he sat down at the ground, which was chilly because of the shadow made by the stone wall. A few seconds after that, both Al and Havella finished eating their own apple, finishing it almost at the same time.

“After onee-san finishes her job, give this to her. This is my thanks for the flowers from before.”

“For nee-san!? Thank you Havella!”

Al was showing a broad smile. He looked to be happier than the time he got his own apple. Kail sighed, saying “good grief”, and Havella… As to be expected, she had an expressionless face on.

“But you know, Al´s onee-san is really beautiful, right?”

Kail was looking at Al with a look of contempt.

“You really look like her, but… You don´t really look masculine, do you?”

Al angrily looked at Kail. His beautiful and soft black hair that was just like his sister made he look a bit girly. He was thin, but this was because of the lack of food to eat. Although he looked even girlier than Havella, he still was male.

“Shut up. I will protect nee-san. I will protect her so that bugs like you won´t approach her!”

“You have courage to be treating people like insects. Despite being so skinny…”

Kail jumped at Al and got on top of him. Messing around, he started to pull Al´s cheeks. Seeing what was happening, Havella muttered something, but it nobody heard what she said.

“So, who is protecting who?”

“Shush up(Shut up)! (調子が悪かったんだ)I!”(TL note: I´m not sure what this translates to… I mean, he is saying something along the lines of him not being in a good condition right now as an excuse, but I dunno how to phrase up this in english ^^ Well, whatever may be the case, he is probably making some kind of excuse.)

“Really… You are all talking.”

Kail took his fingers away from Al´s cheeks, which made them go back to normal.

“Hm?”

Right as he did that, the sound of a bell came from the construction site. This was the bell that showed the time when the break was over and also the time of the beginning of their rough work.

“Ah, I guess it´s the end of our playtime. Then, Havella, let´s meet again after our working time is over.”

“We will be whipped if we don´t hurry after all. Then, see you later.”

“Alright.”

The two went to the construction site and the other one vanished inside the city. All that remained at the back-alley distant from the people eyes were the seeds of the apples.

☆

Al was running. While holding the apple and egg by his chest, he hurried to his beloved sister. While being filled with thoughts of how his sister would react once he showed this apple, Al smiled. He wondered if she was going to be pleased and happy, or if she was going to get a bit angry about it, but after that, give him a hug.

Al caught sight of his house. It was very shabby. The house was small and filled with holes. But even so, this was the most important place to him.

“Nee-san, I am back!”

Al opened the door. What was reflecting in his eyes was a beautiful long hair that had the same color of his own; a black that could be mistaken with obsidian. This was enough to make him happy.

“You know what I got today? An egg and ta-dah! Havella gave it to me. It´s an apple! An apple!”

Al waited for a reaction. His sister calmly turned her head to him and showed a happy smile.

“Welcome back, my cute little knight.”

Al exploded with happiness with that smile.

“Uh? Today´s soup…”

When Al looked at the food that was on the table, he made a puzzled face.

He could still understand how it was possible that there were two egg dishes and the bread on their table. The bread could still have come from the church, and the flowers might have sold well. This was still possible to understand. However, the soup wasn´t the diluted one of always, but one that was filled with many ingredients; it was something Al had never seen before.

“Today´s sellings went really well, so I thought about making a stew. In the past, mother made one for me once, and it was very delicious.”

Al was showing a happy face to the words that his sister was telling him, but there were still signs of doubt remaining in his heart. He wondered if there was any reason why it was today that they were having this special dish.

“”It´s not like today is some holiday or anything. Well, but it looks tasty.””

Al´s belly grumbled. Showing a smile, Arlette urged Al to eat.

“Thanks for the meal!”

Al started to eat in big bites. The taste of the bread made of kabi together with the juice

of the stew made him feel like he ascended to heaven. Was it really fine for it to be so tasty and so good? Because of how much happy he became, Al got a bit scared.

“Is it tasty? I wonder if I cooked it well.”

Al vigorously nodded at Arlette´s question. Arlette showed a cramped smile by how fast he was nodding. Even if it was only a single smile, it filled Al´s heart with happiness. Each and every single gesture of his sister was enough to make Al happy.

“”Ah, I am so happy.””

Happiness comes in more than one form. Even if they were poor and even if they were treated as slaves, as long as Al could be together with his sister, it was fine to him. He didn´t need anything else. Al loved his sister so much to the point that he could easily declare that. And in the same way, his sister loved him too.

“Hey, Al?”

She loved Al. That´s was exactly why they misunderstood each other.

“What is it, nee-san?”

Al tilted his head to the side. Some of the stew few of from the corner of his mouth. Al hurriedly wiped his mouth.

“Hey, Al… is the job you are doing now too harsh?”

Suddenly, his sister asked. Al shook his head.

“It isn´t really that much. They don´t whip people for no reason like the last one, and they also don´t hit us for fun.”

Arlette´s expression became cloudy because of Al´s response. Al wasn´t telling any lies. He really thought it wasn´t anything special. He believed that this much of roughness was simply the normal. Other children of his same age wouldn´t go through this much. Even children of farmers wouldn´t go through such unreasonable experiences. Being punched, kicked, and receiving almost no pay for working through the whole day. For him, this was the usual. He didn´t know anything else other than hell…

“If Al was to be released and become a free person, what would you do?”

Al showed a wry smile.

“It´s impossible. We don´t have enough money to buy ourselves. Even if we work for our whole life, it wouldn´t be enough. That is specially for me. Even a slave like me that only works on labor still receive the lowest wages; it is still impossible.”

He had already given up since the beginning. This was the obvious. In this country, there weren´t ways for slaves to crawl out from slavery. Even a child like Al understood that. He understood it was impossible.

“But what if it really happened?”

“That… I want to become free, but… Ah, if we keep talking about things like that, the soup will end up getting cold. Even though it is a stew you prepared with so much work…”

Rather than talking about impossibilities, the soup had better priority. Once again, Al

began to devour the stew.

If Al had properly finished telling his feelings at that moment, perhaps he would have been able to change the future; whether that was for good or for bad.

“”But as long as I am together with Arlette-nee-san, I don´t care if I am a slave or not.””

This was something he would only come to know later on.(TL note: I´m not sure about this one… それは、彼の人生の終わりで彼は知るだろう。. The ->人生の終わり<- would be more to the older ages…. Him being able to change what is about to happen by properly telling his sister about what he really wished for is something that he will come to now very soon…(by guessing from the synopsis right .-.) so I dunno what this is really about ^^)

[][]

The beast born from the crumbled paradise

In the next day, Arlette was bought by a noble family. All that remained from her was the money for Al to buy himself.

Since a few days ago, despite being refused many times, Arlette had been begging for money at a market she had never been to before and had been accumulating money for paying for Al´s freedom.

Everything was for the sake of Al´s happiness…

Al wasn´t able to stop her. He wasn´t able to stop his sister from being taken.

Al wasn´t able to tell her. He wasn´t able to tell her not to leave him alone.

Al became alone. All this in exchange for him being released from slavery and also some money so that he could live for a while without concerns.

☆

“Yo, long time no see, freed man Al-kun.”

In the way back from Kail´s work, Kail and Havella visited Al´s house. Al received them with a dispirited face.

“…You are shabby like always… Properly clean your room, hey.”

Kail quickly started cleaning. Havella didn´t move to help. She wasn´t good at housework in general. To some point, Kail was good at that overall.

“Here, Al.”

Havella handed an apple to Al. Al sluggishly moved his hand to take the apple, but Kail hit it before he could take it.

“There aren´t apples dead fish can eat.”

“…The apple I stole…”(TL note: Not sure about the meaning here -.- maybe not with the accurate meaning, but it still is kind of the literal translation .-.「……私が盗んだやつ」I guess she is sad about the denied apple? 0.0)

Ignoring the murmured words, Kail glared at Al.

“I won´t tell you to go work. You aren´t anyone´s thing anymore, but a freed man. You won´t be treated as well as other people, but you can say goodbye to all the labor work. I am envious, damn it.”

Kail grabbed Al´s collar.

“But you know, why the hell are you making those dead fish eyes? Don´t go start living like a dead log. Who do you think you own your freedom to!? Aah!? Who do you think that sold her own life for you!? For all the unhappiness that person will have to shoulder from now on, you should at least become happy, or it is no good! You idiot!”

Kail´s angry voice echoed at the shabby small room. Havella doesn´t stop Kail.

“But, nee-san is already…”

Kail headbutted Al, who was grumbling something. This made even Havella surprised.

“If you have the time to be talking about those meaningless things, then go work! Work, work and buy Arlette-san back. This is what you need to do to repay her!”

Al eyes became wide-opened. He had forgot that he could buy his sister himself. Something like that used to be something out of reality for him. It was the same as impossible… But that would only be the case for slaves.

“The limitations for people that used to be slaves are harsh, but people like that are still closer to normal people. The payment they receive has no comparison to the ones of slaves. It won´t be easy, but it also isn´t impossible. I can help you too if you need.”

“Now that all is said and done, what are you going to do, skinny knight.”

Al was embarrassed of himself. He felt he didn´t have the face to look at his two friends anymore. They were thinking about him and his sister much more than he himself was. Al was filled with gratitude.

“Thank you. I will work. I will work hard and buy nee-san´s freedom.”

The light in Al´s eyes were relighted. When, Kail saw that, he became a bit embarrassed of what he had done and extended his hand to Al, who had fallen down with the headbutt.

“Sorry, I exaggerated a bit. But you know, as long as there is someone you can repay

the favor to… you can´t give up.”

Kail didn´t have any relatives. He didn´t know if his family was dead or alive. They were probably dead. Even if he had lingering debts of gratitude with them, he wouldn´t be able to pay them back for eternity. It was because Kail knew that that he faced Al seriously. Differently from himself, his best friend was still able to make it in time.

“Yes, thank you, my best friend.”

Al tightly grabbed Kail´s hand. Putting strength in his hand, Kail pulled Al.

“Havella too. Thank you.”

“Yes. I am your friend too after all.”

She had an expressionless face. However, it wasn´t like she didn´t have any emotions. Al was able to understand the feelings that were at the other side of her expressionless face.

“Then, can you treat your two friends that are tired after working.”

“I don´t have any decent food with me. There is only water and bread pretty much.”

“I have food.”

Havella took out a pouch from behind her. Inside the pouch, it was filled foodstuff to the point that it felt as if she had stolen all this specially for this moment. Looking at each other, Al and Kail smiled. Havella was looking at the two smiling like that without

saying anything or without any expression, but even so, she smiled at the two.

“Ahaha, thanks Havella. Leave it to me. I will do to the best of my ability and treat you with the best cuisine… Well, that is something I learned by watching nee-san though, so...”

Tucking his sleves, Al headed to the very cramped and meager kitchen. Kail and Havella were looking at him from behind, watching him cooking.

It was fine even if he failed. The worth in doing this lied on the fact that it was Al who was cooking. Besides, they were slaves. They were lower than humans. Even if Al failed, they would put to use their prided ability of being able to eat anything.

“Ugeh.”(うげえ)

“Disgus… Tast…. Disgusting.” (まず、うま……まずい)

With how the result became a unrecognizable muddled mix of ingredients, Al´s first try in cooking became something that even surpassed the tastes in food of the three of them, who actually were capable of thinking of mudded water as something tasty.

“Ku, hahaha. This really tastes like shit. By the way, this fruit there really stinks.”

“It was the most expensive one. That stall is a fraud.”

“Like a thief can say something like that. Well, it is really a fraud that this shitty thing can sell for so much.”

“Even though it was so hard to peel that spiky skin… It´s cruel to me how its insides smells so bad.”

At the house that would already be cramped for two people, the three of them were messing around at the dining table. His feeling of solitude weakened, and for some reason, he became filled with energy. It was something a bit different than family; it was friendship. This peaceful feeling was filling the house.

“Ahahahahhaha.”

Al smile came back to his face.

It could be said that at that moment, perhaps it would be the last time he would be able to truthly smile.

☆

In their way back to their homes from Al´s house, Kail and Havella were walking side by side.

“…For now, I will have Kail know about it.”

“Hm, what is it all of the sudden?”

Usually, except when the three of them were together, Kail and Havella wouldn´t really talk to each other. Besides that, it was rare for Havella to start the conversation herself.

“The noble that bought Arlette-san, that count Vrad… There is a problem with him..”

“Problem… Hey, are you saying that…”

“Al will need”

Kail was pulling his hair. Without having anywhere to release the anger he felt for his loved pme, Arlette, and his best friend´s misfortune, he could only vent his frustration by doing that.

“This is… unfair.”

The moonlight was being covered by the clouds, and the darkness of the night weighed upon them

☆

Al was now working his mind off. In the end, the only work Al, who couldn´t read and didn´t have any education, was able to do was physical work and other simple works. If he was going to work at those kind of jobs, the payment he would receive then wouldn´t become much better compared to what he used to receive. However, a person that had set goals was strong.

“I will definitely take nee-san back!”

With indomitable determination, Al was resolved to save up money to extreme extents.

One day, a certain person came to the front of his house. It was a man that was carrying a sack. While wondering what he was doing there, Al called for him.

“Sorry, do you have any bussiness with me?”

The man looked to Al´s direction. His gaze felt like he was looking at Al like he was an insect. This kind of gaze was something Al had experienced many times.

“Hey there, dirt slave brat.”

The man threw the sack to Al. Al angrily responded to him.

“I am not a slave anymore.”

“Hmph. So does it mean you became a human now? Listen, slaves like you can´t become human as long as they live. A slave is still a slave. Freed slaves are nothing but slaves that aren´t being kept by someone.”

This kind of opinion wasn´t something rare. In this country, probably most of the citizens had the same thoughts. Al had already become used with this extent of sneering, but it still didn´t feel good to hear it.

“…What is with this sack?”

Even if he continued to argue with him, it would be useless. Al decided to ask the man what was going to have benefit to him instead of talking about useless things. Seeming like the man wanted to quickly get out of this town, which was much closer to being a slum, he didn´t show any signs of desiring to continue to argue about that.

“The toy became became worn out. It would have been fine if this was in the Count Vrad´s territory, but the agency for dealing with these kind of things here in the royal

capital are a pain to deal with. That´s why I came here to give it back to the place it used to live at. Really, what a pain in the ass."

The word "toy" kept ringing in Al´s ears for some reason. The words "place it used to be" were also worrying.

"What do you mean?"

The man looked at Al with an annoyed face.

"What do you mean your ass. You are really bad at guessing, brat. The toy the count Vrad bought broke, so I came to give it back to its respective place. The rest is for you to deal with. That´s all."

Saying only that, the man took his leave.

Al reluctantly moved his hand to the sack.

His heart was beating like an alarm bell. He should release his hand from the sack. He mustn´t go closer than that.

Al already understood since long ago. He knew what there was inside. It was because he knew it that he mustn´t look what was inside it. He was not supposed to look at it. He was supposed to throw it away without seeing what was inside. It would be fine if he just threw it away at a river; it was fine even if he burrowed it. But even though that was all he needed to do…

Al ended up opening the sack. What was inside it was…

“Gu-urgh.”(お、おぅっぷ) (Vomit sound* -.-)

He was able to endure for a few moments. However, when he opened up, the rotten smell rose up. The instant he confirmed what was the[thing] inside, without being able to keep up holding it up, everything that was inside his stomach splashed out from his mouth. The gastric juice burned his throat. At the ground, there was a sea of the fluid he threw up.

“Ah… Ah.. Ah…..”

His broken heart was letting voices of agony. He started to feel like he wanted to abandon everything and run away. He wanted to forget. He would forget about all this and go back to the days filled with hopefulness. The Kail and Havella, all the three of them.

After all, Arlette-neesan had already…

“Ah, that´s right, brat… What the… That´s disgusting, hey!”

The man came back for some reason. Al raised his blank eyes.

“The payment for getting rid of the [thing]. Here, take it.”

A silver coin was thrown in front of his eyes. Despite that, Al continued to only look at the man´s face.

“Why, why…”

After seeing at Al mumbling nonsense, the man started to complain, spitting saliva as he talked.

"It´s up to the count what he wants to do with what he bought. The count bought it and broke it himself. It´s a pain to get rid of it, and I am even giving you some money because of that. What is wrong with you? Do you want a gold coin? Do you want it? You fucking miser. That´s why I don´t like slaves. You don´t need to pay horses or cows; they are much better. These shitty slaves.."

After spewing whatever he wanted to say, he kicked the sack. A corpse that had lost its limbs came out from the sack. Whether the limbs were cut so that it would become easier to carry or whether those were cut while it was still alive was something Al didn´t know. He didn´t want to know either.

"Come to think of it, this woman… It looks like she used to be quite the beautiful woman. Aa-ah, what a waste. If she was born a noble, she would be pampered all over. Well, it can´t be helped. She was a slave after all."

After saying that, this time, the man left the place for good.

Only Al remained at the place. He simply was standing there stonished. If only he was born a noble… If he wasn´t a slave… Those two thoughts were swirling inside his mind. Al was finally able to understand the meaning of not being considered human. All this that he was supposed to already know about… and all that he had been pretending not to exist until now.

"…I see."

Al knew it now.

"…So it was that."

Al ended up understanding the meaning of not being human.

“Ku, kuku, kuhahahahahhahaaahahahahahhahahahaha!”

Al laughed like a maniac. Rather, he was filling himself with insanity on his own stead. By doing so, he could have his heart break down.

“We are not humans. Isn´t it weird, nee-san! Look, even we have red blood!”

Hugging himself, Al was scratching both of his arms. With his nails gourging at his skin, blood was flowing from his wounds.

“We walk with two feet and we even have two arms! We have five fingers and also two eyes. We have nose, ears, mouth… Even though we are all the same, we aren´t human!!”

Al shouted.

“AAAA

However, right at the last moment, Al stopped. It wasn´t acceptable for him to become a beast. Even if a beast could kill humans, it wasn´t capable of destroying the human society. There was no meaning in becoming just a simple loser that was weeded out by the civilization laws.

“So I guess if I don´t do this as a human, I won´t accept it myself? Yeah.”

Al understood this by instinct.

“Ok, I am calm now. I am a human. At least, there won´t be any meaning to it if we ourselves don´t think so. Isn´t that right, nee-san?”

Despite his sister now being completely changed, Al embraced her like he would always do.

“Sorry for having shouted before, nee-san. I became so happy we could meet once again, so I ended up shouting. Ahaha, isn´t it weird? It´s alright, nee-san is the most beautiful person of the world.”

Her arms and legs were severed, her teeth were broken, her nipples were cut out, her ears were cut out, her eyes were gouged out and the last expression she had made on the verge of her death was gruesomeness itself. In addition to that, because of the considerable amount of time that had passed since she died, she started to smell rotten. But even so, to Al, she still looked beautiful.

“Welcome back, nee-san. Now, let´s go back home. We. If we are together, we can do anything. If it is the two of us, surely…”

Carrying Arlette in his arms, Al went inside home.

He left the silver coin behind. There is no way he could take that. Fff. It was. There is no way he could downgrade his sister to a toy because of one silver coin.

“Are we really not human? Or are we? I want to know. I need to know. That´s why.”

Al closed the door. Inside his house, he was now alone together with his sister. The small house was only for the two of them. The walls were filled with holes, the dining table was very shabby, and the small bed the two of them slept at used to be where his sister would gently put him to sleep.

“Just watch and see, nee-san.”

And then, Al slowly opened his mouth…

“Watch all we will be doing together from now on from inside me.”(TL note: Actually, it was supposed to be only ->僕の中で<-, but it would feel weird without the extra details. English is so annoying with all the need of details ^^)

This was the first time Al became burdened with karma.

☆

“Al!?”

Al´s house was burning. The fire was rising high in the sky and the little house was easily being engulfed by it. He was going to turn all his memories into ashes.

“Is it Kail? Don´t

Kail turned his eyes to the direction the voice came from. At that direction, there was someone he was unfamiliar with standing in front of the burning house. With his beautiful chalk white hair that was shining with the light of the fire, the boy was beautiful to the point of it being scary.

“Are you… Al?”

Kail timidly asked. The boy laughed.

“Isn´t it obvious? Kail is the one who is being weird.”

Kail trembled. Kail knew most of what happened. Havella had been following what was happening with Al´s sister. From the information she received from the connections she had at the guild, it seemed that another slave had died by the count Vrad´s bad habit. And besides that, the one that died was a beautiful slave with black hair. His elder sister had died. To Al, his sister was supposed to be what he most loved without doubt. But even so…

“Havella too, long time no see. You´ve been busy these days. I was very lonely that I couldn´t meet you two.”.

But even so, Al was acting like he usually would to the point of it becoming scary. It seemed that he being able to keep his composure. No, actually he wasn´t even trying to keep it. He was completely calm. Without having even the slightest trembling, Al was standing there.

“I was thinking about changing where to live. See? I have a good amount of money with me for the time.”

He said that as if that was the reason why he had set fire on his house. He was calm, but without doubts, he had gone insane.

“I want to become capable of doing the things I want to do. And in that sense, I am no good in the way I am right now. I need more knowledge. I need more power. It´s no good if I keep being a little kid. So, you see…”(TL note: I think ->やりたいことが出来たんだ<- Is actually ->やりたいことが出来たいんだ<- The first one means pretty much: I was able to do what I wanted. In that case, the only think I could think of would be the burning house. It doesn´t really make sense for him to say “Heh, I got to burn my house. Super dope, aint it?” or something like that. It makes much more sense if it was a mistypo by the author.)

Al was looking at his own house burning.

“I need to say goodbye to the old things. Isn´t that right, nee-san?”

Al stroked his own belly. It was as if there was something inside it. Kail was looking at it startled. Neither Kail nor Havella were able to ask Al about that. They couldn´t ask where Al had put his sister´s body. How aberrant it would be if the case was really what they were imagining it was.

“What is it that you want to do…?”

Kail asked Al a question. In response to that, Al showed a innocent smile to him.

With his white hair fluttering, and leaving the fire, his old home and his memories behind, Al declared.

“I am aiming for the top. I want to do this so I can know if I… No… I want to do it to prove whether we are humans!”

The flames were rising high in the sky. Kail understood. The old Al had already died. The gentle boy that had the same black hair as his sister had already died. And the Al that was standing there now…

…Was a [white retaliator].(TL note: Kind of weird word 0.0 I think it is better than avenger or revenger though ;p ->白の復讐者<-)

[][]

Premilinary arrangements

Since that day, it has been five years.

After a long winter, spring finally came to Arcadia. This year in special, the winter had been very harsh and there were many people that died by starving and were frozen to death. Because of that, everyone was waiting for spring. There was nobody that didn´t become happy by the arrival of spring.

That wasn´t an exception to a certain bookstore of imported books that was located at some nook at the royal capital. In the winter, while they would still could sell books, they would hardly be able to get any new books shipped. Without new books, there were less reasons for the regular customers to buy books, and in consideration to the literacy rate, it was very rare to get new customers.

They would get new shipments at spring. It was a happy season for the book store.

“Hey, take that book from the thirteenth shelf. Uhh, that one that was an anatomy book from Mahshia. Ah, I forgot the name.”

The owner of the bookstore had received th from a customer and now called for his assistant that was at the back of the store.

“It should be the “advanced studies of anatomy”, the one written by Danvour, right? Is it the copy or the translated one?”

“That one, that one. Wasn´t that one still untranslated? I have the feeling that we received new books recently though.”

“Cough*, I translated it myself.”

Getting surprised, the owner´s eyes became wide. The customer, who had heard that, also had his eyes wide-open.

In order to write a “translated book”, it would at least be necessary to know two different languages and for the translation itself, it was required of one´s senses for word choice, which was extremely difficult. And in addition to all that, the book that was translated was one that had arrived only a few days ago.

“Then, I will have the translated version.”

“Thank you for the patronage. Hey, give me the translated one.”

“Understood. Please, wait a moment.”

While his assistant went to get the book, the owner was having a short talk with the customer. Entertaining the customers was also an important job.

“Ah, he is really talented, isn´t him? That boy.”

“The first time he came here, he couldn´t read even a single letter. But he desperately studied, read many books, and before I could notice, he was already even more knowledgeable about books than me.”

As if he was bragging about his own child, the owner showed a broad smile.

“Now, he can more or less handle the transactions of the shop, and he can even have a

normal conversation with the merchants from the other countries. He is even better at foreign languages than me. Not that I am bragging about it though."

Seeing how owner that clearly wanted to boast about his assistant, the customer could only show a wry smile to him.

"Well, but if you were to talk about his bad points…"

The owner turned his head to the back of the shop, wondering when his helper would come. The sound of footsteps coming closer. Finally, the assistant came.

"Here is the requested book. A translated version of the "advanced studies of anatomy". Cough*, I sticked to the original as much as I could in my translation. If there are any parts that are difficult to understand, please, contact me, and I will immediately come to help you."

It was a gray haired young man. His eyes were hidden by his unkempt long gray hair. His skin was pale. He was so full of dust to the point that it looked like he was covered in ashes. He had a bent posture. He wasn´t short, but he seemed so because of his bad posture. His appearance was dull, unattractive, and he didn´t stand out. He was a youth that gave an extremely weak impression.

"If only he kept up his appearance. When he was a kid, he used to be cute, but after he got absorbed by the books, he became like that. Well, he is very exceptional, so I can´t be complaining."

As if the youth had already become used to people talking bad about his appearance, he didn´t show any signs of caring about being talked bad about it.

"Well, isn´t it fine? Thank you. I´ve been waiting the whole winter for this book. However, I don´t know the language of Mahshia. Even if I had the original book, I still

would have needed to get a translator to translate for me. You saved me from some extra hardships.. This really helped me."

After saying that, the customer took out twice the price of the book from his pocket.

"This is the payment for your translations. Please, accept it."

"Cough*, is it fine?"

The youth asked the owner. The shop owner nodded. This was something he had received directly from the client out of his own feelings.

"Thank you very much."

The young man received exactly half of the price paid for the book. Seeing that, the client became content, and taking with him the translated book which was made with parchment paper, he left the bookstore. (TL note: Just to save your time googling what parchment is ^^ Parchment is paper made out of the skin of animals, usually it being the skin of sheep or goats.)

"Is it really fine for me to take this?"

"This is something you earned by your work. You should take it."

The young man once again confirmed with the owner whether he could really take the money. It was only after the owner said he could that he accepted the money. But at that same time he took the money, he violently coughed.

The owner suddenly looked over at the young man´s face. His complexion clearly seemed to be worse than the usual.

“You´ve been looking a bit sick these last few days. It´s fine if you take a break today.”

“Cough*, sorry. I will gladly accept it.”

It was still early for the bookstore to be closed, but it looked like the owner was more worried about the young man´s condition. He started to prepare to close the shop. The young man was about to help him with that, but…

“I´m fine here. Instead of helping me, you should go rest. You are not allowed to read any books, and once you get to your home, you should just eat some food and go to sleep. Tomorrow, . Alright?”

“Understood. I will be going first then.”

The young man quickly bowed. And then, he left the bookshop from the backdoor.

“I hope it is only a cold.”

The owner worriedly looked at curved back of the young man as he left the book store.

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The young man didn´t catch the attention of any person. He didn´t stand out; his existence was like mist.

Even if he was to broke off from the direction of the flow of people walking in the street and went to another way, nobody would notice. The customer from before probably already forgot about the young man´s appearance by now.

Going to a back-alley, the flux of people that were walking by was becoming smaller. Without losing his way, the young man continued to walk. Even at the royal capital, there were places that could be called “dead spots”. Nobody would go through those places. They were places that there wouldn´t be anyone. At the empty back-alley, a small ditch flowed under the street.(TL note: I am not sure about where exactly the ditch is supposed to be…なんでもない裏通り、通りの下には小さな用水路が走る)

“You came. You are early.”

“It looks like I have talent for acting.”

The young man scratched his head. The gaze in his eyes became now filled with energy. The contrast was to the point of it being puzzling.

“Look, Kail, Havella. These are apples I´ve just bought with the extra money I received from a tip.”

The boy threw an apples for each of the two. He also had fixed his bent back now. The aura he gave off became completely different.

“Thank you there, Al.”

Yes, the young man was Al. The boy from five years ago that had lost his sister and pledged he was going to have revenge has now turned into a grown man. His voice had finished changing and sounded more adult-like, and the ghastly aura he used to give off

before became fainter. But even so, he was Al without doubt.

“Well, I was thinking the new star of the gladiator scene and the elite of the assassin´s guild wouldn´t want something like an apple though.”

Kail and Havella had also changed in those five years.

Kail became even taller. Because of his appealing large build, he was sold to the coliseum. And since then, he had been cheered at in his battles at the arena. He was a new up-coming strong combatant.

Havella joined into a guild that could be said to be one rank up from the thief guild; the assassin guild. She obtained the secret techniques from the guild which could put any opponent to shame, and by growing up, she also obtained the feminine charm, which also became a weapon for her. As a thief, she was first class.

“Then, what is it today, our so busy friend that wouldn´t even meet with us these days?”

It has been long time since Al met Kail and Havella. The last time he met with them was half an year ago, and even before that, he didn´t meet with them often.

“It can´t be helped. It felt like dying to have to memorize all those things. Studying too.”

Kail and Havella were also busy themselves, but Al had taken it to another level. For most of his time, he indulged himself in reading books without rest, accumulating knowledge, and he also exercised so that his body wouldn´t become weak. Most of the times he would meet with Kail, he would practice with him in order to obtain the experience Kail had got in the coliseum.

“You already learned all there is to learn.”

Everything were all preparations for today…

“I also grew up a bit. Well, I´ve been keeping myself thin for the sake of keeping up with my character, but I should go back to normal after eating and sleeping a little.”

Al had been waiting for today. In these five years, he had continued to train in order to increase his strength. To Al, winter had been going on since that day. It felt to him as if this winter had ended today, and that it had become spring now.

“So, I understand that you are going to make your move now, but what are you exactly planning to do?”

Kail asked Al. He understood Al was now going to make his move. The three of them understood that what Al had been doing during these five years was all for this sake. However, they have never asked to Al what his plans were.

“That´s right. First, I will have myself killed.”

“Wha-!?”

Al declared something crazy all of the sudden. Kail and Havella could only become surprised by that.

“This is the first prerequisite. In this country, a slave can´t climb up to the top in their entire lifetime. Even if they are released from slavery, they are still [released slaves] and not proper citizens. We aren´t allowed to participate in wars to increase our social status like the normal people do.”

Released slaves had privileges that were close to the ones of normal citizens. But in the end, they still wouldn´t be able to leave from the boundaries of their label as slaves. The next generation of the freed slave, or in other words, their children, would have the same privileges as normal people, thus moving up to the position of citizens. But on the other hand, the person in concern himself would forever be branded as a slave no matter what miracle was to happen.

“And that is no good. If I can´t prove them, then there is no meaning to it. Isn´t that right, nee-san?”

Al stroked his belly affectionately. Seeing that, Kail and Havella made a kind of a complex face.

“No matter how much money I pay, as long as I am a slave, I won´t become a normal citizen, much less something above that. The spots for public jobs are monopolized by the nobility and besides that, they have more control in the politics than the common people to begin with. In the end, there are no other choice other than going to war. There are no other choices other than get great achievements and raise my standing.”

But if he was to do that, he would only be walking in circles. In the end, it was impossible for slaves to crawl out of their social status.

“That´s why I need to die. It is necessary that I am killed. If so, the freed slave called Al will be killed, and the label of being a slave that had been attached to me will be gone with it.”

They understood what Al was talking about. It was impossible for a slave to increase their standing. Even if one reaches the top as a gladiator, it wouldn´t be possible to participate in wars. Slaves weren´t accepted by the society. However, having oneself killed was like putting the cart before the horse.

“So, for now, Kail, can you go tomorrow or so to the bookstore to tell that my condition went bad and that I want to have a few day offs? Say that I am very sorry and these

other sort of things. Also, tell him that I don´t want him to get contaminated with my illness, so he shouldn´t come take care of me, and that I will be able to handle it by myself.”

As he asked Kail to tell a message to the store owner, Al headed to the ditch. Taking some water in his hands, he washed his face. The pale color of sickness and the dark circles in his eyes vanished. Behind all that, a clean and youthful skin appeared.

“Havella, I´ve also been troubling you with favors. Those were very nice makeup. Maybe it is because women use these often? Kuku, women are very good swindlers it seems.”

“But I don´t use makeup.”

“I see. It kind of feels like foul-play by you saying that. Well, I guess it´s fine.”(TL note: Not sure about the TL in this line .-. そうか。それはそれで反則な気もするが。まあいいか)

After raising his face, it could be seen Al reincarnated into a beautiful youth that was beyond recognition to his previous self. But all this was because of the makeup. In these last three years, he had never missed putting the makeup for even a day. Just by using it, it would feel like his aura would become one of another person. And in addition to that…

“After washing up my hair, it will be complete.”

The gray hair. His hair that certainly was supposed to be white was looking like it was dirtied by the gray color. However, after washing his hair, it became white as chalk. This was also part of his disguise. Until know, he had been accumulating all those minor acts. All these were the preparatory steps for having the freed slave Al killed.

“Well, let´s leave the rest for later. For now, I will be counting on you, Kail. Make a face

as much sad as you can."

Al wiped his wet face with the hem of his clothes.

"I have many favors to ask Havella after that. Pass by my home later when you can."

"I don´t mind."

"What are you going to ask her?"

"Ah, just a few little things."

Kail looked at Al with a puzzled face, but Al acted as if that didn´t concern him at all. He completely deflected Kail´s question.

"Now then, after a few days, let´s meet here again. I will be talking about things in more detail then."

And so, the three left the place.

[][]

Al dies and a nameless person is born

“I told you before, didn´t I? Didn´t I say I had a plan? I don´t need my ID anymore.”

“Is there even anyone that would destroy their own ID!? If you are going to do something as reckless as that, you might as well go look for a solution for getting high status as a slave! If it is you, you surely would get appointed as a translator somewhere, you know!?”

“Hah, translators are just people that are used by those rich nobles as nothing more than chess pieces for their companies. They would want to use me as a chess piece!”

“But then, what about your ID!?”

Al and Kail were having a bit of a discussion. Sparkles were scattering around between them. Havella maintained a posture of not involving herself in their quarrel.

“I told you before, didn´t I? It´s impossible to rise up as a slave.”

“But people that lost their documents are worse than slaves, you know? They aren´t even treated as humans.”

“So do you mean slaves are treated as humans?”

Al was glaring at Kail. He was giving off something that was similar to killing intent.

Seeing how Kail started shrinking away after Al said that, Al was able to calm down a bit.

“Fuh, sorry. But it is no good to go on as a slave. It is impossible for me to do it as myself. From the instant you are born, you are destined to be a tool. That is what it means to be a slave.”

After Al had his haircut done by Havella, he became like a completely different person. Rather, he came back to his true form.

“It is impossible in this kingdom. Do you understand what I mean by this?”

“…!? Are you leaving the kingdom?”

Kail finally understood. It wasn´t allowed for slaves to get high in life. However, if he was to go to another country which had different laws, it would be possible to do so.

“Half correct. Well, I will really be leaving the kingdom. Secretly, so that nobody finds out.”

However, it was there where the problem begins. In a similar way to illegal immigrants, people that didn´t have an ID wouldn´t be permitted to go out of the country, much less secretly. To begin with, the existence of people without ID wasn´t tolerated.

To Al, who destroyed his own ID, just leaving the kingdom was already a problem.

“Hey, hey. Don´t say stupid things. How do you think Havella is here now? From where do you think Havella´s parents came through to get here?”

Kail scratched his head while saying “I see”. Havella didn´t have an ID, and both her parents secretly entered. In other words, by backtracking the way they went through…

“It is possible to get out of this country. However, the path is rough.”

Havella spread a map she had prepared beforehand. That was the map of the sewers. Seeing that, Kail let out a big sigh.

“Al, this is impossible. The sewers are filled with human waste. Besides, pushing your way through all that distance to outside the kingdom isn´t something sane to do.”

Hearing Kail´s words, Al made a wry smile.

“Kail. No matter how much unpleasant it is, no matter how much hardship there is, as long as it isn´t impossible, it still can be done. What´s the matter with human waste? If that is the case, should I take a sip at it so that I can prove you? If it is for the sake of advancing to the top, I can take a sip on anything.”

Al had already set his resolve since very long ago. No matter which methods he had to use, he was going to rise in life. If if the most he had to face was human shit, he wouldn´t spare himself from eating it if necessary.

“There won´t be any problems going through the sewers. Later, you need to check if you don´t have any injuries just in case though.”

It was going to be a sea of excretes filled with germs. Al was going to go through such kind of sea. If he had even the smallest wound get in contact with all the bacteria, he would get ill, and so getting diseases such as tetanus.

“Alright. However, what are you going to do after you leave the kingdom? Even if you make a name for yourself in another country…”

“You are also wrong about that, Kail. I will make my name here. There won´t be any meaning to it if I am only recognized at other countries, right? I am leaving for the sake of being able to rise to the top right here. This will only be temporary, you see.”

Kail had a doubtful expression. Havella also wasn´t able to understand. Seeing them act like that, Al giggled. He put his hands on the shoulders of the two.

“Well, just watch. I won´t be waiting for a miracle to happen to me. I will snatch the opportunities myself.”

The two of them couldn´t see the expression Al was making.

“The next time I come back here, it will be the start of a new [me]!”

After all these five years of staying low key, today was going to be the beginning of everything. Now was the time for the grudge demon to make his move.

“Ah, that´s right. Havella, did you send the letter I gave to you?”

Remembering about it, Al clapped his hands together. He turned his eyes to Havella.

“Yes. But, why did you tell me to send it [to that place]?”

Kail looked blankly at them. He didn´t know what Al had asked Havella to do for him. If he knew, perhaps he would have stopped them from doing so.

“Because I need to die, right? I need to die in the documents and also in the memories of people, you see.”

Al laughed.

“That´s why it can´t be helped.”

Kail would only understand the meaning behind that smile after all had already been done. Without having the time to stop him, and without such chance having been given to Kail, Al went his way.

At the same night Al entered the sewers in order to leave the kingdom, a book store had disappeared from the capital. It used to be a store that was loved by the intellectuals of the capital that were intimate with it, but in the end, it had been wrapped up in fire. All the paper burned. Books were something that easily caught fire.

It was bad luck on top of bad luck. Unfortunately, by the tragedy of the fire at the store, the shopkeeper, his wife, and also his [assistant] had died. That was how the incident was taken as. And then, that single bookstore would be forgot and would fade away from the memories of people.

The existence of those three people would be erased from the kingdom. They would be erased from the memories of people, and also from the documents.

There truth about this incident was hidden in the darkness.

☆

“Fuwah, really, it´s nice that I could act all brave back then, but this really wasn´t any good.”

Al went through the sea of human waste and escaped the capital. Al went to a forest that was located far away from the capital, and when he got there, he was able to find a spring. He was finally able to wash his body and clothes. Maybe the way his nose had stopped working was a defense function of the body.

“I won´t go through those sewers ever again.”

After going through the sea of human waste, Al was able to leave the capital. No matter how much he washed himself, there were no signs of the stench fading away. In fact, it had become to the point that it would be better to throw away the clothes.

“Now then, for now let´s buy some clothes from a peddler, and after that…”

Al was working out his mind. Until now, he had never been so concentrated to this point. There were many uncertain factors on the table, and this was also the first time he left the capital. Al reached the conclusion that thinking too hard about his situation right now wouldn´t mean anything.

“I have all the basic skills for surviving. I can do well even at improvising.”

Those five years of preparation. He prepared himself for everything he could. After that, all he needed to do was to put what he learned to use.

“Hey, nee-san. This is the start of our journey.”

Al took out the travelling clothes from the water and wore them. However…

“S-stinky.”

As to be expected, Al decided in his heart he wouldn´t go through anything like those sewers ever again.

[][]

[Willian]

“That guy´s height is not good. That one is too bulky. This one is a bit too old…”

Al was resting by the side of one of the main roads connecting the various countries. This road was somewhat far from the capital. Here was where many other roads converged, connecting all those roads to the capital. Somewhat near the place, Al was observing the people passing by, being there in the pretense of taking a rest.

He had already bought new clothes from a peddler during his way. The peddler made an ugly face when he saw Al, but even money stinking like shit was money. It wasn´t like it was impossible for it to be used. The peddler still made a sour face though.

“There really isn´t anyone with the traits I need. I can´t be impatient with this, but if their appearances continue to be unmatching, I might need to change my plans a bit.”

Losing a bit of his confidence, Al´s expression became clouded.

“Yeah. I guess there is no other way… Hm?”

A certain person entered in Al´s sight.

“Stature, body shape, age; all the requirements fit perfectly. The rest is up to his nationality, I guess. Right now, I already forgot how many people had it been, but well, let´s check it out.”

Standing up, he started to walk behind the person he spotted.

☆

“Yah, nice to meet you. Could I borrow your fire?”

Having suddenly been talked to, the young man looked at the person who called for him with surprised eyes. He probably understood that those words were being directed to him, but it seems he didn´t catch what that person was talking about.

“….? Ah… I, still, word, difficult.”

“Uhm… Where are you from?”

In response to that, saying as few words as possible, the person slowly spoke.

“…Rushitania.”

The young man guessed he was being asked about where he came from. Hence, the young man answered that. However, the young man didn´t think that the person would know about the name of his country. The traveller who asked him the question would definitely become confused. When the young man was about to sigh…

“”It seems you´ve been traveling for a long time. Welcome to Arcadia.””

“!?”

Suddenly being talked to in his mother language, the young man became the one surprised instead.

“I´ve also been doing some traveling myself, so I am more or less familiar with other languages. Ah, what I asked before was whether I could borrow your fire.”

“H-here it is.”

The young man was surprised. Rushitania was a place located between many other countries. Moreover, it was a small country that couldn´t be compared to one of the seven kingdoms, Arcadia. It was already surprising just by having someone that knows of its existence, but to have someone from outside speaking its language was outside of any expectations.

“Ah, it is very incredible for someone of about the same age as me to be traveling around for so long.”

“No, I´m not that much great. Besides, I think you are much more incredible for being that much proficient in another language at my age.”

“I think Rushitania is much more famous than you give credit. Their wooden handicrafts are very famous among the nobles here, and Rushitania is also many levels ahead in medicine when compared to other countries. It is an amazing country that is incredible at the field of forging, making swords that can´t be compared with the ones of other countries.”

The young man was little by little becoming more open about the traveller, who was now smiling.

“Yes, now that I think of it, I didn´t introduce myself, right? My name is Norman. And yours?”

“Willian. Nice to meet you, Norman-san.”

The young man called Willian now completely dropped his guard The man called Norman was someone that possessed a strange charm. The fact they were around the same age played a big role too. In either case, Willian already started to think that Norman and himself were a nice match.

“Why is Norman-san traveling?”

“Right. I wanted to see the vast world, so I went on a journey. However, it isn´t easy. Because I had it difficult for getting money to eat, I´ve been doing a bit of a “treasure hunting” sort of stuff, ahaha.”

“Treasure hunting!? That´s awesome! Could you let me hear some of your stories!?”

With how Willian was biting the bait, Norman gave a smile. Seeming like Willian became a bit embarrassed about what he was asking, his face became a bit blushed.

“I don´t mind. …Right. There was one time I was at one of the seven kingdoms…”

The two talked with each other through the whole night. Becoming good friends, after a few days passed, they already decided they would be travelling together to the capital.

☆

A carriage passed by the side. Suddenly, Willian glanced at Norman´s head.

“By the way, Norman. Why do you use a bandana?”

Both of them had already dropped any honorifics and already deepened their friendship by calling each other by their names.

“There are many people with white hair. It makes me lose my appeal.”(TL note: 白髪が多いんですよ. It is definitely written that there are many people with white hair. I guess the logic is that it is so common it becomes boring to have it. Even so, I have a bit of the feeling it is the other way around and that the author put many instead of few…. Maybe not? .-.)

“Having white hair at young age… In my country, it is said that having white hair at young age is a sign of healthiness. It is also said that people with red hair like me is a sign of luck.”

“Hou, this is the first time I´ve heard of that. I wonder if I should take off my bandana the day I am travelling to Rushitania.”

“When the time comes, I will show you the place around myself.”

“I will be in your care when I do so.”

At that time, Willian was certain. He was certain that he was going to be able to get to the capital of Arcadia safe and sound. The reason for that was because he was able to make such a good friend.

“I wonder if we can already be considered friends.”

“To me, you already became my friend long ago.”

Willian showed a broad smile with those words.

☆

The night was still cold at this season. The two were close to the fire, pulling through the coldness.

“I have a fiancee. I wanted to become a man worthy of her, so I came all my way here. I will definitely rise in the world, and then, I will triumphantly return to my home. This is my dream.”

Willian started to talk. He was sitting at the other side of the bonfire.

“She said she would only marry with a strong man. That´s why I decided to come here. But even so, that girl… Right when I was about to depart, she started crying. She was telling me not to go and so on. Isn´t this kind of selfish? But I am happy that I am loved. Now, all I need to do is raise military achievements!”

“Willian, is your family wealthy?

Willian started to ponder for a bit.

“Hm, well, I guess it is more to the rich side, but it is nothing compared to the people from the seven kingdoms; the place I live is only a boring place filled with forests and mountains.”

“I see. I want to go have a look there one day.”

“You should come! I will always give you a warm welcome!”

Their conversation started to become lively. Soon, they would arrive at the royal capital. But even so, Willian wasn´t anxious about that. This kind of feeling had vanished a long time ago. Everything was thanks to his friend, Norman.

☆

Those days they had been travelling together were soon going to be over. They were going to arrive at the capital tomorrow at the afternoon.

At that night, Willian was feeling a bit lonely.

“Would it be fine if I went there just for a moment?”

“Where are you going to?”

Norman suddenly stood up.

“Well, it´s that “treasure hunter” thing. Apparently, there is a bandit treasure buried under a certain tree at that forest. The bandits had already been executed in another country, and it is said that only their treasure remains.”

Willian´s eyes started to sparkle. It could be said that he was overflowing with interest.

“Do you want to come with me?”

“Yes!”

Hearing Willian´s answer, Norman showed a smile.

Distancing themselves from the road, the two of them went towards the forest. Obviously, there weren´t any humans passing by at that place; it was a place ruled by the darkness of the night.

“It should be here. I will need to dig for quite a bit, so please wait I am digging.”

Taking out all the equipment for digging, Norman stuck the spade into the ground. The sound of the ground being dug could be heard. Without putting a considerable amount of strength, it wouldn´t be possible to dig the wet earth.

“Fuoh, it´s really tough.”

Norman seemed tired. Seeing that, Willian, who had only been watching Norman, now stood up.

“I can help you too. Let me do it, Norman.”

“Thank you very much. Let´s take turns then.”

Willian started to dig. He was surprisingly doing well.

“It´s because I´ve been playing at the mountains since I was a kid. I am very good at these kind of things.”

Willian continued to dig using an incredible amount of strength. In contrast, Norman

“By the way, Willian. Did you leave your luggage at the bonfire?”

“Dig dig*… No, I brought the important things here just in case.”(TL note: えっほえっほ I don´t know how to translate this. It looks like this is the sound you do when you are doing labor stuff, I dunno. Kind of like heave-ho, I guess? .-. I tried to put the SFX of the moaning* you would do when doing those kind of rough labor work, but they all seemed weird -.-)

“Hohoh, and what do you mean by saying “important things”?”

“Dig dig*, hmm… Obviously money, but also the sword my father has forged for me, and also my identification documents. I am going to need those three to be able to live here after all.”

“Oh, could I have a look at the sword forged by someone from Rushitania, the kingdom of blacksmiths?”

“I don´t mind. By the way, until when am I supposed to keep digging?”

“Only a bit more.”

Rummaging through the luggage, Norman found the sword. After finding a certain paper lying next to it, the corners of his mouth rose.

“Dig dig*… Still not yet?”

“Not yet. Oh, that is very nice. It is a very beautiful sword.”

The blade of the sword shone right after it was drawn from its scabbard. How much money was it necessary to get your hands on a sword like this in Arcadia? Except for nobles, it would be impossible to have a sword like this. The combination of beauty and toughness charmed Norman.

“Isn´t that right!? My father isn´t good at using swords, but he is first-rate at making them. By the way, is this still not enough? I´ve already dug a lot. Isn´t it perhaps at another place?”

Digging and digging; even after digging a hole a person could fit in, there was no treasure to be found.

“No, there shouldn´t be any mistake. It certainly should be a bit deeper there.”

“Is that so? A place someone has dug before should be supposed to be a bit easier to dig though. Sorry Norman, I am a bit tired now. Is it fine for us to change turns now?”

Willian said to Norman, who was standing behind him.

“Yes, alright. Let´s change turns.”

Willian was about to turn his head and give the spade to Norman, but…

“From now on and forever, right.”

At Willian´s stomach, there was a beautiful silvery shine. It was the product of many his

father´s drops of sweat. And that was now piercing through Willian. He couldn´t understand. He couldn´t understand the misfortune he had fell into…

“Wh-why?”

Willian was staggering. The viscous blood was dripping from the blade.

“Why did Norman…?”

Willian couldn´t believe Normal had stabbed him. He believed he was his friend. He believed they had become best friends. Even though he had alread

“Haha, Norman, is it? To begin with, my name isn´t Norman.”

The young man named Norman took off his bandana. It was a silky and smooth white as chalk hair. Perhaps, the shine of the moonlight being reflected on that white hair would normally be thought as beautiful. However, right now, the only impression it gave was of fear. Coupled together with the expression of the young man…

“My name is Willian. I will be taking it from you. Be happy, your name will spread through the world and your existence will reach the top of Arcadia. I will be raising all the military merits. And for that, you will need to die.”

The white haired man thrusted the sword at Willian. That which was made for the sake of protecting Willian was now easily cutting through his body. His right arm was cut off.

“I don´t understand what you are saying! We were friends! Was all that meaningnesssss!?”

Willian shouted. However, his voice wouldn´t reach anyone. Nobody lived in this forest. And besides that, they were far away from the road. Willian´s lamentations wouldn´t reach out to anybody. Not even to the man in front of his eyes…

“Friends and friends, you say? No, maybe it is impossible. I hate you, and I don´t think I would ever come to like you.”

Willian´s eyes became wide-open in desperation.

“I can see that you were blessed with a good home and was raised with love. You have a family and also have a fiancee. This kind of extravagance…. This kind of happiness… There is no way [we] can forgive you for thiss!!”

The blade of the sword shone brighter. Willian´s left hand flew away. Willian´s screams didn´t reach out to the young man in front of his eyes. The young man´s heart had already been broken five years ago.

“You were supposed to value this happiness! You weren´t supposed to come to a place like this and try to aim for somewhere higher! You overestimate yourself. In either way, someone like you would be dying someday anyway. That´s why you should be thanking me. Just like you wished for, I will have your name thunder through the world!”

Willian´s consciousness was gradually becoming blurred. He was bleeding without stop from his wounds. His life was flowing away. His friend, Norman, had destroyed his hopes for the future.

“Yes, I will also tell you something. That “treasure hunter” talk was all something I took from a book, and Norman was the name of the owner of the bookstore who used to sell books just like that one. And…”

The white demon kicked Willian. Willian fell into the [hole].

“This is your grave, Wiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiilliaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaan!!”

By that time, Willian couldn´t think clearly anymore. All that remained was his happy memories from his hometown. Those memories were going through his head. His memories about his beloved fiancee. The idle chattering he would have with his family. His elder and little brother, his little sisters, the memories of him going through the mountains…

“Oh, I will be taking your head, Willian.”

Cutting off him from those memories, the blade cut off Willian´s head.

“Goodbye, Willan. I have to thank you.”

The fallen head was already a corpse that couldn´t answer back. Picking up the head by the red hair, the young man threw the head inside the hole.

“Fuh, it was unexpectedly… very easy to cut his neck. Or maybe it is because this is that much of a good sword?”

Going back to using the language of his own country, the young man heartily tasted the sensation of having cut the life of a person.

“It´s alright nee-san, don´t worry. Even I am surprised. I thought my heart would hurt at the first time I killed someone…. Yes, it is fine.”

Having a calm expression in his face, the way the young man was acting made it feel like he indeed had something broken about him.

The young man picked up all the parts he had cut into pieces of [Willian] that were lying around near the hole and threw inside the hole. After getting rid of all the vestiges, the young man let out a big sigh.

“Well, it´s fine. Now is the main act. This will be the crucial part of my life-time that will decide whether I will rise up in that kingdom. Now, let´s bury this guy already, shall we?”

The young man started to fill the hole. He didn´t have any expression in his face.

The white haired man, Al, had once again built up his karma.

[][]

The third class civilian Willian Rivius

“I wonder where that guy is by now.”

Kail was together with Havella at the back-alley the three of them would usually meet together.

“…”

Havella was acting as if she was somewhere else. Kail could only show a bitter smile about that.

“You are really silent when that guy isn´t here.”

“…Is that so?”

“That´s right.”

“I see.”

And with that, their conversation would end. The three of them would usually be talking to each other without stopping, but now that one of them was lacking, the conversation became in that state. No, it was definitely because Al specifically was there that their conversations would be like that at those times the three of them were together.

“Havella, at the time that guy comes back…. Please, don´t stop me.”

“…?”

Havella tilted her head in confusion. Kail frowned.

“I already know how he returned those five years of good will in cruelty.”

Havella averted her eyes. Without caring about that, Kail continued to talk.

“By using your connections and having you send a request to the assassin´s guild… he had the owner of the bookstore and his wife killed. In order to destroy any evidences, they burned the shop. They even prepared a corpse to take Al´s place just to be safe, didn´t they?”

Havella, the accomplice of the murder of the owner of the bookstore and his wife, still didn´t look at Kail in his eyes. Kail continued with his words. To Havella, not being the one blamed was what felt the worst to her.

“It´s no wonder I had been thinking I was taking things too lightly. Wanting to have a day-off my ass. He had everything burn up, had him be forgot from the memories of people and documents…. But is that supposed to be how it ends!? Are you kidding me?”

Kail was mad. Havella was feeling guilty.

“It´s really nice you aren´t someone from the military or a guard, Kail.”(TL note: .-. This line is kind of weird. I think Al is saying that because of how Kail was talking about Al having killed the owner and the wife お前が軍や見回り連中じゃなくて良かったよ、カイル)

A voice that was definitely supposed to be impossible to be heard at this time here in this place reached the ears of the two. Shocked, the two turned their heads to the direction of the voice. The one standing there was…

“Yo, how is it, you two? You are even making such stupid faces.”

It was Al, who was supposed to be outside the country doing something by this time. For whatever was he planning to do, the two of them didn´t think he would come back so early.

“Why? Al, didn´t you leave the country?”

Despite Havella usually being very composed, her voice was trembling. Surprise and happiness and many other emotions were surging through her. Seeing that, Al smiled just for the sake of it.

“Who said I was going to be outside for long? I said it was only temporary, didn´t I?”

After jumping down to where the two of them were standing, Al approached them. (TL note: It doesn´t specify where he jumped from.)

“Well, I had enough of that sea of shit. I won´t go through that place ever aga…”

Al made a “good grief” pose (TL note: How a “good grief” pose would be called? I don´t even know how it would be… I guess something that is sort like facepalming?”

“Sorry, Al.”

Kail dived his fist into Al. Being sent flying, Al fell into the ditch. His face became twisted by the pain and the surprise.

“What are you doing!?”

“Those people… They said you were like part of their family. They said that one day, they would let your succeed the bookstore. They didn´t have a son, so they would let you, let you…”

Kail was trembling. What Al had done was something that couldn´t be forgiven. Whether it was by fairness, or in the ethical sense, and obviously so by the laws as well, such thing couldn´t be forgiven. Five years ago, the owner of the bookshop hired Al despite him not being able to even read. To Al, he was a benefactor that granted him knowledge. All the things Al owed to him were supposed to amount to the size of a mountain.

“Ah, they were very nice people..”

While wiping the blood that was at the corner of his mouth, Al muttered in a disappointed tone.

“Really nice people.”

If Al still had regrets about that, it would still be possible to start it over. If he had even a fragment of regret, it would be possible for him to redeem himself.

“They were… very convenient for me.”

If there is no regret…. there wouldn´t be any feeling of awareness of having done a bad thing. Not even the slightest.

“They gave me wisdom. They gave me knowledge. They gave me a place to study. They were very nice people. They have my appreciation. I hope they can live happily at the

other world."

Kail couldn´t recognize who the person in front of his eyes was. Al was someone that aimed for the top no matter what he had to go through. He was someone that wanted to have revenge for his sister. Kail knew that. He understood that. But then, what about the monster in front of his eyes? Wasn´t it simply making everything worse than before?

"The only family I have is Arlette-neesan. The only friends I have are the two of you. Except for that, everyone else has nothing to do with me. Why care about other people? Whether they will be useful to me or whether they will become a step for me to step on; that´s all that matters."

During those five years, Al became distorted and filled with a certain something. What that certain something is was something that was out of Kail´s expectations.

"It had been that way since ever and it will be from now onwards."

Al took out an old parchment. That was a document that consisted of only one piece of paper. It was his ticket to the future.

"This… It´s a third class citizen ID. How… did you get it?"

A third class citizen. In this kingdom, people that had the IDs from the first class to the third class all had the privileges of being a citizen of the kingdom. It was a miraculous document that was impossible for a slave to get his hands on even if he was to spend all his life on trying to.

"That´s right, you guys can´t read. This ID… I stole it, you see? From the little Willian-kun from Rushitania."

Kail and Havella couldn´t read. Even if they were able to recognize that the design of the paper represented that it was a third class ID, there would be no way for them to read the name that was written there. That´s why they didn´t realize right away. They didn´t understand that the written name in there wasn´t Al´s name.

“Stolen, you say? Then, what about that Willian guy?”

“Who knows? Maybe he is deep inside a dark hole somewhere?”

Al didn´t show any signs of hesitation in saying that at all. On the contrary, he had an expression that made it feel as if he was boasting about it. Forgetting all his anger, Kail became completely astonished. He didn´t know what he was supposed to say now.

“IDs have the information of the little traits of one´s body; there should be ways to confirm the fingerprint of the owner of the ID. It will be difficult for you to make use of it.”

Havella became surprised for other reason. There were many times that people tried to use false documents. However, most of the times, they would get exposed. It was difficult to get your hands on a proper ID even at the most shady of places. Sometimes, the ID of other people would appear for sale at the black market. However, having the ID of somebody else didn´t have any meaning; it didn´t even have any demand for it in fact.

“Yes, you are correct, Havella!”

Al acted as if he was waiting for this question. Al turned his eyes to Havella.

“The identification documents of the kingdom are very complex and detailed, and are impossible to forge. If you use the ID of someone else, there won´t be any meaning to it. After all, there is also the problems with the digitals. Even if they are in decline, the

seven kingdoms are still holding for their name. However, this isn´t the same for the other kingdoms."

Kail looked at Al with confused eyes..

"I´ve seen many documents in the time I´ve been working at the bookstore."

Al was happily explaining the reasoning behind his plan.

"All the countries uses identification documents for people, but they aren´t the same. Even if there are documents that are full of details…. there are others that are simpler. And besides, even among the simpler ones, the ones used in Rushitania are among the simplest. The only things stated there is the name, residence, the gender, age and the social status in the home country and the official stamp of the country; nothing more. And with all that… I won´t be hindered from impersonating that guy."

It was a method the people of this kingdom had never thought of. Except in business trades, the identification documents of other countries weren´t really seen by people. Al knew about the IDs of the other countries. That´s why he was able to think of this plan.

"Rushitania is a country located deep into the mountains. It is a gathering of various communities. They social positions don´t have much disparity, and to begin with, most of them live their whole life in villages anyway. They use identification documents for the sake of external affairs, but it isn´t considered very important. That´s why it sucks. It is filled with loopholes."

Al licked his lips. Among the many Al had been listing until now, the ID used in Rushitania was one among the candidates. During those same years he had been doing his listing, Al had been camouflaging himself as a defenseless youth. It was surprising, but the logic behind it was very simple.

“But I was very tense at the time I went through the gates. If I had done any misstep at that time… Well, I would be dead. But after I was able to get my credentials as a foreigner, all my worries and anxiousness were over. With that, I can finally stand at my starting line to the top!”

Havella gave an applause with an expressionless face.

Al indeed had done great. He was able to obtain something that it would definitely be impossible for a slave to reach out his hand.

“Al, you are wrong.”

However, all his miraculous exploits were gained by stepping over corpses.

“Kail, what´s been up with you? Don´t worry about other people. No matter how many of them die, they have nothing to do with us, you see.”

Havella nodded, agreeing to Al. If Havella had to say, she had the same opinion. To her, the demarcation that separated the ones she cared about from others was very clear; she didn´t care about other people.

Kail gave a sharp glare at her. Havella felt despondent.

“Hey, I didn´t really want to say that, but you know. Because you are a gladiator, you too should already have killed one or two people, right? Havella also had been stealing things. You´ve already done these kind of things. But even so, why is it that only me am to blame? Don´t you think you saying that is a bit inconsistent?”

Kail hanged his head. Seeing, Al snorted.

“…Yes, that´s right. No matter how much that is supposed to be your job, this is definitely something that can´t be forgiven just because of that reasoning. Someday, I will receive my retribution, and probably so will Havella. That´s what karma is.”

Al started to feel goosebumps. The air around Kail had completely changed.

“But I only wished that you wouldn´t need to enter in this world. You became free after all. I wished you could succeed the bookstore and keep living your life in a honest way!”

Kail moved his hand to the sword at his waist. The instant the blade could be seen out of its scabbard, it became filled with killing intent.

“It´s still not too late. You should live honestly while redeeming for your sins. I was too late to stop you, but there is still time left. This ID… You should use it to live a new and honest life.”

Kail still wished that Al would give up on his ideas. It wasn´t possible to receive punishment by the laws anymore. No matter what arguments one was to present, he would definitely still receive death penalty. That´s why Kail wasn´t going to irresponsibly open his mouth about it. However, he at least wanted Al to repent for his crimes in his heart.

“Jokes, I´ve just started. I will use anything I can! I won´t take any round-about ways; I will crawl up to the top while trampling everything!”

The moment Kail heard that, he drew his sword. In order to put down silly ideas, sometimes it was necessary to use force. It was because Al was his friend that he was going to do it.

Al was trembling. The aura Kail was exerting was completely different from the one at the times he would practice with him. Al had never seen a shinigami before, but even so, he started to associate it to how Kail was right now.

“Then so it will be, but until I put a stop to it. I will use my sword. You won´t die… but it will hurt.”

“Stop it, Kail. There is no reason for us to fight.”

Havella tried to stop Kail.

“It´s alright, Havella. I am a bit angry too anyway. You´ve always been scolding me in the high horse… Until when are you intending on act like you are my big brother or something!?”

Declining Havella´s calls, Al also drew his sword. It was a sword from Rushitania that was forged by Willian´s father. It was a masterpiece that is rarely seen.

“It´s a nice sword. Did you steal it too?”

“Yes, it is a little parting gift Willian-kun left for me. You won´t want to face this sword, Kail!”

Al tried to threaten Kail.

“So what?”

A crushing feeling of calmly being looked down at from a high place assaulted Al. There

wasn´t anyone that suited being called someone that does things by force more than Kail. Besides, in terms of experience, Al also couldn´t compare with him. This was the strength of the man called Kail.

“It won´t be my fault if you end up dying!”

Raising his sword overhead, Al charged at Kail. For someone that used to be buried in books, this was a very sharp move. It had rationality backing up those movements, and in addition, there were minute details in the movements. It was a swordplay that matched with Al´s personality. However…

“Don´t worry…. You won´t be able to kill me.”

With the speed that surpassed Al´s reflexes by far…

“Gh, ha!?”

…Kail hit Al´s stomach with the side of the sword. It had been only one hit, however, the amount of raw strength in Kail´s attack was something of a different level. Being made to yield to the superior swordplay, Al was sent flying to a wall. Even Kail´s techniques were in a higher level. (TL note: By saying the side of the sword, I meant the flat part of the blade^^)

“Give up. You still can start it over.”

“Shut uuuuuuuuuuuuuuup!”

Standing up, Al once again faced Kail. He himself was exceptional. He was going to stand on the top.

“This is of no use.”

Such blind confidence collapsed.

As Al was heading towards him, Kai hit him without any mercy. Making the difference between their strength become clear, Kail was hitting Al with the side of his sword. In terms of the strength of the blow and techniques used, doing this would make a great handicap for Kail. But even so, Al couldn´t touch Kail despite that. Even if Havella tried to stop them, neither Kail nor Al were able to stop.

“Stop it.”

Havella was crying. Her expression didn´t change. But even so, tears were falling from her eyes.

“How about we stop it already? Havella is crying. We two wish you to be happy. We wish you can live your life in a proper way. Please, understand this, my friend.”

Kail seemed like he was about to break in tears. While looking Al, who was lying on the ground, he felt his eyes swaying in pity.

“Stop, kidding, me.”

But even so, Al stood up and pointed his sword to Kail.

“Be happy? Live honestly? Stop kidding me, stop kidding me, stop kidding me!”

Al was roaring. Those screams were coming from the depths of his heart.

Raising his sword, he thrust his sword at Kail. At that instant, Kail could only block the attack.

Both had their sword locked onto each other.

“Who was the one to steal from us first!? Who were the people that stole all from us!? Is there any reason for us to leave them all alone and just sit through!? We need to kill them all. The guy that killed nee-san, the ones that sold her to him, and the society, who allowed this to happen; we need to kill all of them! Where is happiness supposed to be in this world!? Will you resurrect nee-san? Kail!?”

Throwing a tantrum as if to argue his way through, Al started to act frantically. Those feelings that had been confined since that day now exploded.(TL note: Better way to phrase up this line?駄々をこねるようにがむしゃらに打ち込む .-.)

Kail could only block the attacks. He couldn´t do anything but block them. Parrying Al´s sword, Kail once again hit him with the side of his sword. With his skill, it was possible for Kail to kill Al, but there was no way he could kill Al, who was his friend. (TL note: “Couldn´t do anything but block” in the sense that Kail couldn´t do anything to help his friend, but only block his attacks.)

“If you can´t do it yourself, then don´t try to stop me. Don´t deny my life. I only have you two left. You know what happened with nee-san… Please, don´t deny me.”

Al broke in tears. It was as if that day five years ago had come back to him. A child was now the one standing there.

“Al, you…”

For the first time, Kail saw Al´s inner feelings. His heart was solely set on revenge. It was filled with the feeling of revenge, and Al could do anything for that sake; that was what Al´s life became. Perhaps, there wasn´t anything inside him other than his resentments remaining.

“If you are going to deny me, then kill me. Kill me, kill me, kill me, kill me, kill me, kill me, kill me, kill me, kill me, kill me!”

Because of how straight-forward it was, there was nothing it could be done. To Al, his sister was everything. There was only a little space for the two of them. All Al pretty much had in his life was his sister, so it can´t be helped that he wants to have revenge.

“If you kill Al, I won´t forgive you.”

Havella took out a dagger from somewhere and pointed it to Kail.

“We are friends… aren´t we?”

After Havella´s words, Kail could only lower down his sword. Even if he was to say anything, it wouldn´t change anything. Even with Al in face of death, Kail wasn´t able to stop him. Kail couldn´t kill his friend.

“Al, I won´t accept this. However, I can´t stop you now.”

Kail sheathed his sword. He went back to the usual Kail. With a expression of resignation in his face, Kail was pondering about something.

Seeing that, Al made a relieved face.

“I will do my best so that Kail can accept me. We are friends after all”

Al´s words didn´t correspond to his true intents at all. Even if both knew about each other´s false intentions in their words, neither of them could do something about it. Even if Al died, he wouldn´t change his mind. Kail also couldn´t kill his best friend. And also, the two of them were close friends after all.

“So, what will you be doing from now on?”

Al´s face became bright once Kail said those words. After also sheathing his sword himself, he once again looked at Kail.

“That´s right. Ah, right…. As to be expected, I guess I need to go to wars in the beginning if I really want to make fame for myself. That was the reason why I got this third class citizen ID. I am going to volunteer to the army and go to the frontlines. There, I will get achievements and build a foothold for my rise.”

Al looked at the two with a sad face. By going to the frontlines, he won´t be able to meet them for some time. Depending on the situation of the war, he might not be able to come back for years.

“I see. All I can say is: don´t die. All I can tell you is for keep living.”

“Good luck, Al. We will be waiting for you.”

“Thank you, you two. I will do my best.”

The three were good friends. However, even so, it wasn´t possible for them to

understand each other. Even in the cases they were able to do so, there were still things that couldn´t be touched.

“Also, Al. That swordplay from before wasn´t bad.”

Al made a sulky face.

“You say that even though you easily beat me.”

Kail put his hands on Al´s head and started to mess up his hair.

“It´s because I am strong. Still, your skill is quite a bit for the battlefield standards, skinny-kun.”

“Stop it, let me go!”

“Gahaha, as if.”

“…Fufu.”

“”Havella smiled!?””

They went back to the three. The three of them knew that this was only in the surface. But even so, it was exactly because it was only in the surface that the three of them valued it. It was because they knew that this wouldn´t last forever…

“Either way, don´t die, Al.”

“I know that, Kail.”

Al was going on a journey. A journey to rise to the top.

Today was the turning point. If Kail had to stop Al, today was the only day it would be possible to do so now. Kail was going to regret his decisions in the future. He would regret it to the point of wishing he had stopped Al even if he had to cut his arms and legs. Rather, Kail should have stopped Al much earlier, when the karma still wasn´t weighing down onto him.

However, there are no “ifs” for the past that already happened.

Al went forward. Even if his path was to be soaked in blood, he wouldn´t stop.

[][]

Karl

The south region of the kingdom of Arcadia, Raconia. It was a contested region, and originally, it belonged to one of the seven kingdoms, the kingdom of Ostoberg. Before that, it used to be Arcadia´s territory, and even before that, it also used to be from Ostoberg; that so on.

In a land like this, there wasn´t anyone at the fields working; it was a desolated place that had kept changing owners. There was anybody eccentric enough to want to settle in a place like this. There weren´t any benefits for conquering this land anymore; the kingdoms continued fighting for it only for keeping their faces.

Once again, another battle that seemed to be as if it had been arranged by both sides was taking place today.

"…I am tired of this."

A bit to the front of the fort, at the field the battle was happening, there was a white haired man.

"Ah, yes yes. It is really nice you are full of energy, yes."

"Uryaaaaaaaaaaah Hyueeeeeeei!"(うえりゃあああああああひゅえええええええい！)

"….Get a hoe or something and go work on the field. In the next world, though."(TL note: Literal translation… I guess this would be in the meaning that the guy there is so weak he wasn´t supposed to be in the war, but doing farm work instead.)

One more head was cut. The white haired man was dejected.

“This is only a little quarrel of small fries. Even if I fight here, I won´t get even a single copper coin.”

Nimbly parrying the attacks of the enemy soldiers, the man casually continued to cut off the heads of the enemy soldiers. However, even if you more or less stood out in the battle, it didn´t mean you would make a good impression to the upper brass. To begin with, you wouldn´t even get their attention. If Willian was to stood out, the most he would get would be he being used for whatever dirty work there was by his small fries officers that were only able to get to their position by slowly rising up.

“The superiors are also desperate about their own life anyway, so they aren´t even looking at me.”

The young man was spilling idle complaints. To him, there wasn´t anything to learn in this place, and there wasn´t any gain from it either. This was exactly how the land they were fight for could be described as.

““Let´s eat something and go to sleep after this war is over.””

The young man fought with lack of motivation while he was thinking that. Before he could notice, it was already becoming morning. The war was close to its end.

Today, another of the usual battle from everyday had finished. Just like always, it ended in a draw.

☆

The fort of Raconia was replete with merchants. Even if there was no productivity in this land, the soldiers would still buy things, and besides, the money gained from that

wasn´t bad. As the result of that, the place was unexpectedly very prosperous. Most of the shops were stalls, but there were some that would rent buildings for setting their shop.

“Rabbit stew! It´s filled with meat.”

In a shop that hadn´t prospered as much as the other of the many other shops, a white haired young man was having lunch.

“Here it is.”

The dish that was crudely served was a bunch of food piled up in the bowl in an unorganized manner, but the amount of food served was very much, the price was cheap, and the taste…

“Like always, it is disgusting.”

Although the youth bluntly said so, the owner of the eatery didn´t even bat a glance. As if the young man wasn´t feeling the horrible taste, he sipped the stew and ate the rabbit meat.

Ignoring the taste, the youth continued to eat. He noticed the presence of someone sitting next to him, but without caring about that, he continued to move his spoon.

“Uhh… Give me the same as that person there.”

An order that lacked individual opinion. Without either the white haired young man or the owner of the eatery caring about these details, they continued to do their own business. From the cooking pot, the owner took a healthy amount of stew and put it into a bowl that was of the appropriate size. Because of how much appropriate the amount

was to the size of the bowl, the people that would order for the food would get surprised. There really weren´t many people that would ask for seconds in this eatery.

“Here it is.”

The person became lost for words after seeing the food that being was served to him. After trying it, he once again became lost for words. And then, after looking at the remaining amount, he felt like foam was about to come out of his mouth. This was the pattern the people that would come to this eatery for the first time would do.

“Yo-you are really incredible. For you to be able to eat this…”

It seems the person next to the young man was talking to him. The young man raised his head.

“Ah, uhh, I am nobody suspicious. I am from the same squad as you. My name is Karl Teirah.”

After looking at the youth that named himself Karl, in an instant, memories that there had been a new recruit at their squad went through the young man´s mind. It was possible to feel the quality of his bringing only by giving a glance at his curled golden hair.

“Willian Rivius. Nice to meet you.”

After saying that, Willian went back to eating his meal. Willian used to be the freed slave called Al, but right now, he was called Willian Rivius. He was a third class citizen that came from Rushitania.

“I know it! Everyone has been talking about you. They said there was a strong guy with white hair. And also that… you weren´t much of talking…”

Karl nervously said the last part in fear the owner of the eatery would hear it. In a sluggish manner, Willian once again raised his face.

“Your business?”

“Uhm… Well, I was wondering if we could be friends.”

At that instant, Willian was assaulted by a feeling of deja vu. Karl´s face was being overlapped with the face of the red haired boy. Even though the red and golden were different colors, their character were similar.

“…Sorry, but I will refuse. I don´t want to make any friends here.”

Because of that attitude, Willian wasn´t a very likeable person. f

“Ah, I-I see. I guess it can´t be helped in that case. Ahaha.”

Karl disappointment was clearly seen. His face looked very alike [himself]. The face of the [himself] that he took the place of, and that should have already been dead…

“What about you go eat your food? Your stew will end up getting cold.”

By saying that, Willian forcefully ended the conversation and went back to eating his food. Answering “U-uh, yeah”, Karl looked at his stew. After moving the stew to his mouth, he fell down.

“He-hey!? What happened!? Was the taste that bad!?”

As to be expected, even Willian became surprised at that. The owner of the eatery didn´t pay any mind. This eatery should be demolished already.

“Dear customer, the bill.”

The owner of the eatery was demanding the payment of both the serves from Willian. He wasn´t even looking at Karl, who had fallen down. It was weird how this eatery could still keep functioning up to this day. It was the number one eatery Willian wished that it was destroyed in Raconia.

“I will pay it. I just need to pay it, right.”

After finishing taking care of Karl, Willian reluctantly paid for both the food and ate the two servings.

“Disgusting!”

Whether it was because Willian was able to eat the food despite the bad taste or because he was able to eat two servings of food, as to be expected, even the owner became surprised.

“I will come again!”

After saying that, the moody Willian left the eatery in a dignified manner. Whatever may there be to be said about this, for Willian, who was still in his growth period, it was important to have somewhere where he could get that much of an amount of food in a cheap price. Even if it tasted bad, it should be very nutritious.

“Shit, today is my unlucky day.”

Because Willian couldn´t just leave Karl somewhere, he had to carry him in his back. If it was at the time he had, he would have ignored Karl, but right now, he was in his same squad. It would be troublesome if bad rumours about him were to spread.

“I should at least carry him to my room.”

Willian carried his “baggage” to the room he had rented.

☆

“M, mmmm.”

Karl woke up. After opening his eyes, he noticed he was at a very simple room. In that room, there was one simple bed and a window and table that received exposure from the sun. There was someone hanged at the window frame. Seeing Karl had woken up, that person went down the window.

“U-uwah!?”

It was Willian. After he had heard Karl´s surprised voice, he released his hands from the window.

“It looks like you woke up. Then, go back to your own room. In case you aren´t staying at any room, then go back to your sleeping bag.”

“Ah, uhm, Willian-san… What happened?”

Maybe because he was still startled by Willian having suddenly gone down the window, Karl was still having a surprised face. Willian scratched his head.

“I was training. Pull-ups exercises the whole body. I can add weights to it as much as I want, and besides, it´s the only training I can do while being inside my room after all.”(TL note: Do pull-ups really exercise the whole body? Isn´t it only the arms? Maybe some special way of doing that sort of thing? I don´t know about this kind of things -.- Well, it is written here that it trains the whole body ;p 懸垂は全身運動だ)

“Pull-ups? Weights?”

For someone from Arcadia, Karl´s confusion wasn´t a weird reaction. To begin with, Arcadia´s training consisted of only swinging the sword, the spear and having mock battles. Trainings methods like pull-ups and others of the sort weren´t really done, and it would be downgraded to it being some kind of a child´s game. There wasn´t the concept of adding weights to improve the training either.

“There are training methods like that as well. If you want to know about it in more details, then go read a book named “Spartyi”. Since it is the libraries of Arcadia we are talking about, there should be copies of this book and also translated versions.”

In the past, there was a time Willian used to be Al. This book was one Al had read many times. There were training methods in that book that the other training methods used in Arcadia wouldn´t even suffice as a comparison.

“So Willan-san can read books. You are really knowledgeable.”

The nonchalant words that came from Karl made Willian startled.

“We-well, it is more or less like common sense though.”

“Besides, you came from Arkas, right? I am also from Arkas. Ah, my brother also likes to read books, so I think Willan-san would be able to have a good conversation with him!”

Before he could notice, Willian was already digging his own tomb. It looks like he became careless and slipped his tongue, ending up talking about useless things. After giving a long breath,, he was able to calm himself down.

“I am a third class citizen from Arkas, so I am more or less from there although II am a foreigner. Isn´t it fine already? I have things to do tomorrow too, so I want to rest.”

“So Willian-san is a foreigner! I´ve heard many things about…. Ah, I can´t, I can´t. I have many things I want to ask you, but I need to let you rest. Thank you for taking care of me! Then, see you tomorrow!”

Karl dashed out the room full of energy. He didn´t forget to bow to Willian before closing the door.

After seeing the door being closed, Willian put his hand in his head.

“This is really… a pain in the ass.”

Willian´s sigh resounded through the small room.

[][]

The fall of Raconia

“Willian-san! Good morning!”

“…You are already so energetic at morning. Good morning.”

Karl was looking at Willian, who had an annoyed expression on his face, with sparkling eyes.

“Oh, are you two acquainted with each other? Then, you go take care of him.”

“Wha-!? But!”

Because of the sudden arrangement, Willian let a few words escape.

“Hm? Do you want to talk back, foreigner guy?”

Being glared at, Willian flinched. The other man was his superior, and also a second rank civilian. There were many reasons why Willian couldn´t talk back.

“No, I understand. Come Karl, the place we were stationed at is to that direction.”

“Ah, yes!”

The superior officer was glaring at the back of both Willian and Karl.

☆

Willian and Karl got to the place they were assigned to. It was at the higher floors of the fort, behind the archers. Like how it would always be, from the distance, an army was starting to arrange into a formation outside the fort. Exactly like how it would always be, it was an attack that went in accord to the programme.

“You are very unlucky. For you to have to stick with a hateable guy like me.”

Maybe because of how bored Willian was, he started a conversation with Karl. Karl was being afflicted by the pressure of the silence. After being talked to, his face brightened. And so, he went to test the waters and said…

“Willian-san, are you disliked by the others?”

Karl looked at Willian with a blank face. It seems he didn´t understand why Willian had said that before.

“I am. This is because I didn´t know the scale of it at the first.”

Karl tilted his head to the side, not understand what Willian was talking about by saying scale.

“No, it´s only that… It´s just that I didn´t think there so many soldiers that were like that to that extent, and that I also underestimated the feeling of envy of humans.” (TL note: Yep, there is really nothing specified there. T.T well, it should still be possible to get what it is being talked about)

Turning his eyes away from the open-mouthed Karl, Willian looked to outside the fort. Today wasn´t a battle at the field, but a defensive war; it was one which you would be shut inside your castle. Willian was looking at the army that was approaching towards the fort of Raconia.

“Hm, just like alwa…. Isn´t there too many?”

The battlecries started to resound through the fort. And in response, the surroundings of the castle also started to make a stir themselves.

“Rather than just saying they have more than us, it would be better to say they have many times our numbers.”

Just like always, the sounds were. The idle mood was blown away from the Raconia fort.

Karl couldn´t keep his back straight because of the fear. Yesterday was his first battle, and that battle was only a small skirmish. Compared to the army that they were facing today, it had been a very small scale battle.

“You are lucky, Karl-kun.”

Karl looked at Willian. His face

“You will be able to have a taste of battle. You will overflowing with it.”

It was a gruesome smile.

Today, the tranquilness in Raconia was no more.

☆

The battle started. The battlefield was filled with corpses. The allied forces weren´t standing in front of the fort of Raconia anymore. There were many places that had ladders which permited the advancing of enemy troops. Things like what squad you belonged to or where the spot you were assigned to didn´t matter anymore. It was a clear defeat. It was a lost battle.

“It isn´t that bad.”

With a smile, Willian cut down the invading enemies. By comparing him to Karl, it was like comparing a baby and an adult; it was to a level that even comparing was presumptuous.

“This is good just like this. Yes, this is the best!”

Leisurely piercing his sword at the openings of the armor of his enemies, Willian. Tearing through their throats, the sword made the sound of cutting through the wind. Being deprived of their throats, the enemy soldiers couldn´t even scream.

“I am really lucky.”

Willian kicked with all his strength the enemy that put out his head as he was climbing up the ladder. Willian saw off the scene of the many other people falling together from the ladder one after another with a smile.

“Now then, I guess I will keep cutting them up until the command of retreat is given.”

Jumping into all the confusion, Willian was cutting the enemy soldiers. He would evade the attacks of his enemies, and sometimes use his allies as a shield. That gapless style of fighting was in a different different to the concept of the battle in ranks and formations.

“I am not like you, you bunch of worms! My practice partner is as giant as a fucking gorilla you would see at the circus. Other than that, I am not like you that kept doing practice-swinging like retards. I used my head and trained my body in a efficient manner. To begin with, the world I am living is different from you brain dead worthless trash that are lower than insects.””

As to be expected, there was no way Willian could speak out those thoughts. If he spilled them out, he wouldn´t be able to stop doing so.

“”Hm, oh, isn´t Karl-kun still alive? Well, he looks like he is about to die though.””

Karl was desperately swinging his sword, but it was obvious his moves were amateurish. The enemy soldiers weren´t too much of a threat either, but that guy was to the point that dying was only a question of time to him.

“He-help!”

He was asking for help to his surroundings, but obviously, nobody reacted to it. They didn´t have the spare time for it, and everyone was concentrated on themselves. With nobody reacting to his pleads, the spear of a enemy grazed right at Karl´s cheek. Karl fell down and soaked himself in piss. And right in the verge of his death…

“So-some-body.”

At that instant, Willian´s and Karl´s eyes met. It was only an instant; it was a momentary

meeting.

“”As if anyone would be helping you. After all, you too lived a happy life, didn´t you? You had a family, warm food to eat, a soft bed to lie on, and also, and also…”

Willian turned his eyes away from Karl. This was equivalent to a death sentence to Karl.

“Dieeeeeeeeeeee!”

The enemy soldier, a soldier from Ostoberg, was also risking his life. He should also have a family. A family he was supposed to love, to protect. He was here in order to… protect his family.

“Eeeehhhhh!?”

The spear was sent flying in the air. It wasn´t only the spear. The arm that was swinging it also flew to the air, and the blood scattered. The spray of blood covered the soldier´s sight. He didn´t comprehend what happened. He couldn´t understand it, but…

“Die.”

The soldier understood that he was going to die.

His head flew. As to not have blood spilled at them, Willian kicked the headless corpse away from them.

“What… am I doing?”

Willian couldn´t believe what he was doing. His hand was trembling. It wasn´t trembling because he had killed someone. It was trembling because he had saved someone. He saved a human that was unrelated to him. He saved a young man that looked to be fortunate, to be happy, and whose character didn´t match this place. It couldn´t be believed.

“”For an instant. Just for an instant, the face of that man overlapped with his face. That red haired rich boy.””

The red haired youth he had killed himself. The man whose existence he stole. His face; a face full of resentment was smiling at him as he called for him, mumbling the name “Norman”.

“Ah, ahh, Willian!”

Being overcome with emotions, Karl started to cry. Even forgetting to add the “san”, he clinged at Willian and cried. He continued to mutter “thank you, thank you”. Willian was looking at this scene with a cold look.

“It wasn´t much… Can you stand up?”

Without looking at Karl´s eyes, Willian extended his hand. There was no way he could let the expression he was making now be seen. He couldn´t let it be seen by anyone, not even by Kail or Havella.

“Thank you, Willian. …Ah, -san.”

Remembering to add the “-san” at the end, he forcibly added it at the end.

“You can call me just by Willian. You should ready up to leave here soon.”

“Eh, but is it fine for us to leave our position?”

Willian casually killed several of the approaching enemy soldiers in one sweep, and then, turned his eyes to Karl. His expression has already gone back to his calm one now. He already couldn´t see the illusions of “himself”.

“It is not that it is fine. It is just that everyone that would reproach you for doing that has already died.”

Willian remembered using his superior as a shield in order to escape from the enemy´s pike a few moments ago. There was no mistake that he did it in the heat of the moment, but it had been something necessary.

“”To begin with, the ones I need dead the most are the many high ranking officers. The surviving ones… I need to have them to die by their own, or it will be a problem to me.””

It was more than stupidity to be carried away by an already lost war and die.

“”Well, this guy should have its own uses. If I don´t think it in this way, I will lose my motivation in protecting him.”

Willian looked at Karl´s face, which now had a stupid expression on it. Karl finally remembered about the embarrassment of having wet himself, and now he was blushing. Even though they were still right in the midst of a war, he was acting very carefree.

“Let´s go. If you don´t want to die, follow me.”

“Ye-yes!”

With Karl following behind him, Willian went down the fort. If they wanted to escape, it was natural that they needed to go down to the northern gate first. Because of how conspicuous they were being about escaping, it should become an unnecessary burden to them later.

“”I need to get out of here… I won´t be part of the massacre of this boring as shit place.””

Looking behind him, Willian sighed.

“”Ha, really, what am I doing?””

Behind him was Karl, who was following him with sparkling eyes.

At this day, in only a short moment, the fort of Raconia had fallen.

[][]

That which dwells at Arkas, the Lebensraum

“My innards went cold l when I heard that Raconia had fallen.”

“Yes, yes. Kail was all nervous.”

“And you were crying.”

“I wasn´t crying.”

It had been a week and a little since Raconia had fallen. Al, who pretended to be Willian Rivius, came back to the capital, Arkas. After the order of retreat was given, Al and also the other soldiers of Raconia were sent back to the places they lived at in order to reorgarnize the army and also for resupplying their armament. Of course, Al would need to go back there after some time.

“Either way, cough*, it looks like you had bad luck. Well, if it is you, you should soon be recognized by your skills.”

Al smiled at Kail.

“Bad luck? Don´t joke, this was so lucky to me to the point that it is scary.”

“Lucky? Weren´t you caught up in a defeat?”

“Yes, it was quite the hopeless war. And because of that, the people that used to despise me also died. Because they lost many soldiers, there will be vacancy in the military positions. Well, the positions that will be opened up aren´t that much great… but

it is still true that it is necessary for me to get the people on those positions to step aside so that I can have them."

Al spread his arms.

"I won´t be promoted by having fought a lost war. However, this is much better than the shitty drawn out method of building up achievements day after day. Do you know why, Kail, Havella?"

The two immediately shook their heads. It felt a bit disappointing to Al because of how they didn´t feel like trying to guess it.

"It is because after that defeat, the wars I will be sent to will be ones that will happen for the sake of winning. This is a matter of honour for them. Now that the balance of the contest for Raconia was broken, Arcadia will do its all to take it back."

Kail clapped his hands together.

"I see. So this means you will get to go to wars that you will definitely win."

Al wagged his finger to Kail, who had jumped into conclusions.

"It is not like we will be definitely winning those. I said it before, didn´t I? It is a question of honor. The other country will definitely prepare its forces for the war so that they can win. Now that Raconia was captured, from here out, it will become the so called classical war between Arcadia and Ostoberg contesting for Raconia."

There was no way for the lowly part of the populace Kail and Havella were part of to know about this, but the fact was that the true show really only started after Raconia would get captured. According to history, it has been close to ten years that Arcadia had

maintained its control over Raconia. Capturing and recapturing the territory was a rivalry between the two countries based on the honor as fellow countries that were part of the “seven kingdoms”.

“It will be a war both won´t be conceding. It will become a huge war. If we lose the war, everything will go down the drain. However, if we win… there will be a bunch of opportunities for me. This is an once in a lifetime chance.”

From now on, any of their moves will be in a large scale. Even if Arcadia is to lose, the war will still be a great one, and with the expected vacancy in the positions, this will become a chance for the survivors. In case the war is won, the gains will be to the point that there will be no comparison. But even so, the chance of dying still wasn´t zero.

“Going hunting after some grimming small fries won´t be of any use. It needs to be in heads. I need to take the heads of big shots. Only then I will get promoted!”

“Well, I don´t know well about war. However, you should still take care.”

Kail said in a warning tone to Al, who was starting to get excited.

“It will be that much of a big war. There might be guys that are stronger than me. No, there will definitely be. You will be fighting guys of that kind.”

“I can´t feel any difference even by you saying that.”

Being warned about the war, Al lost his excitement. Kail showed a wry smile.

“That´s right… There should be people you would feel this kind of shiver from.”

Suddenly, Al felt a chill in his back. Al´s skin became full of goosebumps. It was the same feeling he had felt at that time…

“Don´t go. You should be able to understand that. One day, you will become capable of winning against guys like that. However, the you of right now won´t be able to.”

What Al was feeling right now wasn´t something rational. It wasn´t something that made sense. However, Al could understand. He could feel the disparity between him and the man in front of his eyes. That man was the one warning him about the war. He needed to consider those words. More than anything, Al´s own instincts were also telling him that he wouldn´t be able to survive, which confirmed what Kail had said.

“I understand. I won´t go for them.”

Al took a pose of resignation. Seeing that, Kail smiled.

“By the way, Al, where are you staying? Do you have somewhere to stay?”

Al lost the rights of the house he used to own together with his identity as Al, a freed slave that [died by burning to death]. Right now, another person was living there. Al also didn´t feel like returning there either. If he was to do that, the fact that Al, who he was able to have dead after all the troubles, was still alive would get exposed.

“If you don´t have anywhere to stay at, I can let you stay on mine. I live by myself, so there is nothing to worry about.”

“”No, I would be worried about it. For many reasons.””

Both Al and Kail´s had the same thoughts in their mind. The three friends were soon going to be adults. There were many things that could happen between a man and a

woman.

“It has the space for three people. It isn´t that big though.”

Havella indirectly revealed that both her parents had died, but neither Al nor Kail became that much worried about it. To Havella, parents weren´t an existence one was supposed to love. She didn´t love them. They only raised Havella so their lineage wouldn´t die out, and except for that, they didn´t want much with her. For all the love she lacked, Al and Kail replaced it with theirs.

“Sorry for having you guys take care of me so much. Well, but for now, I already have a place to stay.”

Havella dropped her shoulders in disappointment. But even so, as to be expected, her expression didn´t change even the slightest at that time.

“Where is it?”

“I will be staying at the house of an acquaintance. Even though I tried to refuse… I was pressed on with that.”

The instant Kail heard that Al had an acquaintance, his face became bright, and Havella frowned. It was rare for Havella, whose expression wouldn´t really change, to have it change so much to that point.

“Is it a friend!?”

Kail´s eyes were sparkling. After hearing those words, both Al and Havella spat at the same time. (TL note: Kind of in the way people spit out their drinks when something “surprising” happens, but without any drink.)

“Spare me from jokes. You are the only ones that are my friends. That guy has nothing to do with me. Although he is not one of us, I just don´t want to get on his bad side. I had many problems at Raconia for rubbing people the wrong way.”

There was that man that was his superior at Raconia. After some time, he had him killed by using him as a shield for himself, but even so, the annoyance in his surroundings still didn´t stop; Al still had a long way to go over this problem.

“I see, I see—. Then you should go have a stay there. Become good friends.”

Kail was pushing Al´s back. Without saying anything, Havella kicked Kail on his back.

“He-hey, we still have time!”

“It´s fine, it´s fine. Just go there already.”

Kail ignored. Havella continued to kick him.

“Fine! Well, let´s get together one more time before I leave to the war. See you then!”

And just like that, Kail was able to push Al away from the place. By that time, Havella was out of breath.

“It hurts if you do that, Havella.”

“It´s Kail´s fault.”

“This will be a good thing for him.”

Kail was smiling. Becoming annoyed at that face, Havella once again kicked him.

“Ouch! Don´t kick my jaw!”

“Shut up! It´s because Kail is stupid!”

Saying only that, Havella disappeared from the place to somewhere.

Kail, who was the only one remaining there, sighed.

“Both of them rely on each other to carry on… I guess I can´t say much about it myself though.”

Now by himself, Kail spoke his thoughts out as he scratched his head.

☆

“Ah, Willian!”

“”…Why is he already here?””

There was still time from the arranged time. But even so, Karl was already waiting for

him. But more importantly than that…

“You came very early!”

“Ah, yes. Well, I didn´t have anything to do.”

It was a difficult to accept reality for Willian that he had also come early. It was extremely annoying how Karl was looking at him as if he was having fun about it for some reason. If one was to ask him how something like that was supposed to be annoying, in the end annoying things still were very annoying.

“So, we will be arriving there just after a little walk.”

“Alright.”

Willian glanced around the surroundings.

“”Arkas is separated in four districts. The slums, the merchant´s district, the residential district and the noble district. Other than that, there lifestyles of people in the same district will vary depending on the person´s assets and social standing.””

The place they were right now was an area that was prosperer in comparison to the rest of the residential district. So in the end, was Karl a spoiled kid of some rich family as Willian had expected?

“”He probably is a first class citizen. There shouldn´t be any second class citizens living here.”

Even though they were part of the citizens, the first class citizens had the privilege of getting a great sum of the paid tax. At least in the overall numbers, the privileges they had were close to the ones nobility had. Of course, there was still a great gap between them and nobility, but…

“You know, my father said that he wanted to meet you after I told him about you.”

Karl talked nonstop, spewing words like a machine gun. Willian continued to be silent.

“”I´ve never been that far into this section of the district. With how rich the people that live here seem to be, it should be possible for them to hire common slaves and servants, and even buy the whole slave company.””

The feeling of grandeur the buildings gave off started to increase. Being comparatively as much prosper as the place, the people that lived there could only be appropriately prosperous too.

“”Wait a second. This guy… Does this mean he is absurdly fucking rich!?””

Willian looked at Karl´s eyes. Karl gave a puzzled look to Willian.

“It seems you are very rich.”

“Yes, but the other houses around mine are even more awesome. My house isn´t that much of a thing.”

“”Did they force their way into living in here? But they should still be very rich just on how they are able to do that. This guy…. It seems that he will have some utility.“”(TL note: Force their way in the meaning of the family not having as much money as it would supposedly be necessary to live at the place there, but because they really

wanted to, they used up their money more than they should just for that sake. I couldn´t think of a better way to phrase up this line since I couldn´t find any other words to describe that)

Willian´s thoughts were dripping in malicy. Willian started to imagine the many ways he could use Karl, who was far-off much more rich than he expected.

“Are we arriving there soon?”

“Just a bit more.”

Willian made a puzzled face. Ahead of here, although it was still at the residential district, only the truly prominent rich people lived there. The place was already heavens itself…

“It is right through that gate. Please, wait for a bit, ok?”

“Thr-through that gate!? He-hey, wait a second!”

After getting all the way to the said gate, Willian´s face became grim. He had a great amount of sweat on his back. His breathing started to get rough. His heart started to beat like an alarm.

“What is the matter, Willian?”

Karl was making a innocent face. That was what it was the most scary right now.

“At the other side of that gate.. It was definitely supposed to be the place the nobility

lives at.”

“Ah, you know really well. It is really incredible for someone that came from outside!”

Karl happily said. However, something like this didn´t matter at all to Willian. The important thing now wasn´t that. The most important thing now was…

“Are you… a noble?”

“Yes. Well, I am a fifth class noble; it is the ranking of a baron, so it is not that much of a thing. I also still wouldn´t really be considered a notable figure.”(TL note:The word used here is 爵位, which means kind of like having a notable position or so, like the position of a general, count or something like that. Because it is a bit overgeneralized there, I was a bit lost when translating this line, so I put this note just in case ^^)

Karl declared the shocking reality as if there was nothing special in doing so.

The instant Willian heard that, he became pale and immediately fell to the ground. His head hit the floor with full force and he completely fell prostrate.

“Eh, Willian, what happened!?”

Karl became surprised seeing that. This was what Willian would commonly refer as a “Dogeza”. His trembling back didn´t give any impression of firmness. (TL note: 0.0 This really shocked me when I read this line. It shows how much of a trauma Al has ;-; I kind of started to feel like shit in the dumps during the whole story after what happened there for some reason .-. By the way, for those that don´t know, Dogeza = kinda similar to OTL. If you still don´t get it, then just google it xD)

“Nonetheless the fact I was unaware, I am extremely sorry for all the acts of rudeness I

have committed!”

Noises of chattering started to appear at the surroundings. To Willian, the noble district was a place that could mean life and death. If he acted wrong, or if he misspoke something, he would immediately be executed.

“What´s the matter Willian! Aren´t we friends? You are my benefactor who saved my life! There is no need for you to lower your head!”

Karl said as Willian faced his words with his lowered posture.

“No, it is a fact that a third class civilian like me has overspoken too much to the son of a noble! I will do anything possible to compensate, and I will also accept any light punishment! Therefore, please, somehow spare my life at least!”

There was no way Willian would accept dying in a place like this. There was no reason at all to believe in Karl´s words. The moment Karl, who Willian used to think as a worthless individual, was to want his life in a whim, his life would be brought down. Just like his sister had….

“Like I said before, you are my benefactor, so…”

“I was thinking of leaving you to die at that time!”

Yes, if Willian didn´t commit any mistakes, he could instead use this opportunity. However, Willian had committed a single mistake. It was a mistake he would definitely not have done if he knew Karl was a noble. His mistake was that he had been about to leave Karl to die. And then, Karl, who had seen it with his eyes, should be aware of that.

“It was in the middle of the battle, so it can´t be helped. Besides, didn´t you help me in

the end? You helped me without knowing that I was a noble…. This made me really really happy. That´s why please, raise your face. Please, be your frigid self like before.”

Willian was afraid of raising his face. If he was to raise it, and then, if there was a smile of contempt in Karl´s face, he would die. He would die because of something he had just heard about…(TL note: Not sure about this line ->道半ば、いきなり降って湧いた事故のような出会いによってーー<-)

“”Like I am going to die. As if I am dying in a place like this!””

Willian raised his face. What he saw was Karl´s smile of relief. But even so, Willian´s anxiety didn´t go away. He [himself] knew of people that could smile despite planning on killing you. He [himself] knew it to the point of hating it. There was nobody that could really say Karl really wasn´t someone of that sort.

“Now, stand up.”

Willian slowly held the hand Karl extended to him. He didn´t lower his guard. He was vigilant. But even so, he had no choices other than taking that hand.

“Ahaha. In the end, even you are troubled about me being a noble.”

“Indeed. There is the possibility I could get killed by displeasing you, sir.”

“Ah, there is no way I would ever kill Willian! Besides, nobility can´t so easily have people killed.”

“”As if. Even though nee-san got killed like she was some piece of trash.””

Willian was anxious, but he didn´t do the foolish thing of letting it show in his face.

“Now, polite speech is prohibited from now on!”

“That is… impossible.”

No matter how much Karl was to reproach Willian, there is no way he would be able to change that. There were other eyes watching them from the surroundings. There was no way for him to know whether there would be other nobles that would look at his lack of manners towards a fellow noble and find a fault in it.

“Mu, well, let´s fix it up step by step then. For now, let´s get to my home first.”

Willian and Karl once again started walking. Willian was walking a bit behind him.

“Understood, Karl-sama.”

“Using -sama is not allowed!”

“However, adding honorifics to Karl-sama´s name is only appropriate.”

“In either case, it is prohibited for now!”

Willian showed a troubled face. He was scared of Karl´s angry face, but from hereon, there would a unknown number of nobles he would have to face. To the puny Willian, he wouldn´t make it through if he was too cautious.

The two of them stood in front of the gates.

“It is Karl Von Tirah.”

“You should be Lord Teirah´s son, correct? Please, make your way.”

The guard threw a glance at Willian.

“It is my friend.”

Karl immediately declared. If one had to say, a lowly person such as the gatekeeper didn´t have the rights to have a saying on who was and wasn´t supposed to go through in that case. That was what it meaned to be a noble. It was being privileged from the time you are born; if a noble wanted black to be white, the black would become white.

“Please, make your way.”

The gatekeeper didn´t stop being suspicious of Willian. There was no way he would.

Willian was feeling out of the place. He was being overwhelmed by the place; he was being overwhelmed just by the buildings there.

“This way. It is a bit embarrassing that my house doesn´t really amount to much, but treat it as your own home.”

Willian´s senses were paralysed. If he had seen this house before all the houses he had seen until now since he had gone through that gate, he would probably be overwhelmed by it. However, after going through the gates, he was able to touch a bit of the air of this

[world]. And because of that, the house felt a bit lacking.

""No, I am stupid. It is obvious. The owner of this house is a baron. It is the lowest class among the fifth ranked nobility.""

To begin with, the people that lived here were of a different level. Here was the perfect world. It was too much of a lack of sense to be comparing this place to the lower world. Willian could understand a bit of Karl´s feelings of embarrassment. In this world, that house was indeed lacking.

But Willian wouldn´t forget…

""I… wasn´t supposed to even have the qualifications to be standing in a place like this.""

The whole world denied Willian´s existence; it denied Al, who used to be a slave.

""However, I will definitely eat up all of you.""

Saying this was still a bluff at the moment. His strength, knowledge, experience; everything of his was insufficient.

But even so, Al advanced forward. He could only do that, and that was the only type of life he would live; he didn´t wish for anything other than that anymore.

[][]

Lord Teirah

The residence of Lord Teirah was unexpectedly not very splendid. However, the furniture of good taste and each of the decorations of the residence gave it color. With the airs given off by the decoration being very uniform, it could be seen that there was only one theme being used. There was a good feeling of honesty in it; it was something that wouldn´t be felt from the tastes of the first class citizen rich upstarts.

“Because my father has the principle of not using much money in material objects, people often say that we are being too much of misers for how we keep our house like that, . Bt even so, I really like my home.”

Willian mentally nodded at Karl´s words. It wasn´t gaudy, but it was elegant.

“In my opinion, I also think it is graceful.”

“As I said before, stop with the polite language! It is starting to feel creepy.”

“”Isn´t it obvious that doing this is impossible, retard.””

Willian got angry at Karl, who was looking at him with dissatisfied eyes, and complained in his mind.

“”Their garden isn´t too big and their walls aren´t that high. If necessary, it will be possible for me to escape from here.””

The garden wasn´t that much wide, but as to be expected, its decoration had good taste. There was a water fountain at its center, and it was surrounded by a pond. If right now was the habitual state of affairs, perhaps Willian would be able to have a

comfortable rest at that garden, but he didn´t have the spare time to be doing this at the moment.

“”I can´t find anything eye-catching in the structure of the house. Even without having a good look at it, I can already imagine how the corridors are organized.””

It was indispensable that Willian made his preparations for escaping in case Karl was to go back in his words or if Karl´s father wanted to have Willian dead.

Perhaps the chance for this to happen was low. However, the percentage wasn´t zero.

“This way. They should already be done with the preparations for dinner by now.”

Karl signaled Willian to come with a hand gesture. There were many servants in front of the door. It was possible to notice that they were wearing maid clothes of quality and that they had been well trained in their conduct and way of movement.

“…Understood.”

Willian´s expression didn´t change. Since he came all his way here anyway, he was able to set his resolve. Him meeting a noble, an existence he couldn´t even imagine about, was an opportunity that had came early for him. Yes, this was an opportunity.

“”I… won´t lose.””

His resolve was now completely set.

“Please enter, Karl-sama, Rivius-sama.”

A maid that seemed to be of old age opened the door. Then, the person sitting at the farthest seat of the table said…

“Welcome to the Teirah residence. I welcome you, Willian-kun.”

It was Lord Teirah. It was the first genuine noble Willian had seen in his life.

“It is my deepest honor to be invited by you, Lord Teirah.”

Willian deeply bowed his head. He had some etiquette imbued in his body. This too was knowledge he acquired from books. It was the first time he put it in practice. Since this was the first time he had met with a noble, such was obvious, but…

“Your hair is really as white as chalk. I was thinking the man would have white hair mixed with his hair, Karl.”(TL note: I think he is saying that he thought Willian was an old man. Karl should have told him that Willian was very knowledgeable, so it should be the case.”

Willian turned his eyes to the direction of the voice. At that direction, there was a man that had a wavy blonde hair tied together in one bundle. He looked to be slightly older than both Karl and Willian.

“I am very sorry, elder brother.”

Anger could be seen in Karl´s response.

“I am being rude to the visitor for not introducing myself already. My name is Ainhart Von Teirah. My profession is being a scholar and I am Karl´s elder brother.”

Seeing Ainhart respectfully bow to Willian, Willian himself bowed to him in reaction. Seeming that that scene was amusing for the Lord Teirah, he laughed.

“And the one sitting to my opposite side is our most beloved little sister, Lutogarde.”

The girl that was sitting to Aingart´s opposite side of the table bowed in an embarrassed manner. The moment her eyes met with Willian´s, she immediately averted her gaze.

“”…Is it too disgraceful for her to meet eyes with a commoner?””

Willian´s expression didn´t change the slightest, but he wasn´t calm in his mind. Willian couldn´t help but feel that the man sitting at the back of the table, Karl´s elder brother Ainhart and even Lutogarde were looking down on him. Rather, it was definitely only him imagining that.

“Ahaha, Lutogarde is very shy when meeting new people. Really, you need to properly greet him!”

Karl puffed up his cheeks. (TL note: Rly mate? -.-) Looking at that, Lutogarde made an apologetic face.

“M-my name is Lutogarde. Nice to meet you, Willian-sama.”

“I am from Rushitania. My name is Willian Rivius. It is my pleasure meeting you, Lutogarde-sama.”

Willian carefully told his false story. No, in fact, he [himself] was without doubt Willian, who came from Rushitania, so there weren´t any lies.

“I guess I am the last in the self introductions. I am Lord Teirah, Louran Von Teirah. I will be in your care, Willian-kun, Karl´s friend and benefactor.”

Willian was slightly troubled at how a noble had lowered his head to him.

“Now, have a sit. Albeit it is a meager one, let´s have dinner.”

“…Excuse me.”

The arrangement of the seats was that Louran, the head of the house, was at the back; to the left was Ainhart and Karl, and to the right was Lutogarde, and now…

“…Uhm, is it fine for me to sit here?”

“Ah, yes, by all means.”

Lutogarde answered in a very meek voice. Willian sat down.

“Fill your plate with the dishes of your desire and let´s start our dinner.”

With Louran´s call, the dinner started.

☆

“”I don´t recognize this taste. What am I eating right now?””

Every single one of the cuisine lined up in the table were tasty food Willian had never eaten before. But even so, he was having trouble with the table manners, was also worried about how the conversation would go, and in addition to that, he had to talk about Rushitania, his home country he actually had never been to. Because of the extreme feeling of tension and the too tasty of a food he normally wouldn´t be able to eat, his tongue became completely numb of taste.

“…But it seems Willian-kun has been studying very well.”

“No, this is nothing to be that proud of.”

Putting his elbow on the table, Louran smiled.

“No, it is quite something. For you to be that much fluent in a language of another country, and also even paying mind for learning the etiquette of another country, and the intelligence you have show during parts of our conversation. In addition to all that, at least as far as I heard from Karl, you are also strong.”

Willian was scared of that smile. It was obviously a smile that was different from the one Karl was doing. Louran´s gaze was one that was analyzing him. He had been thinking there was something strange with Willian since a little ago.

“”Is this man testing me?””

It was an act for the sake of making Willian delve inside more detailed subjects regarding Rushitania. Thinking about that now, perhaps all the self-introduction from before had also been something for the sake of examining the man called Willian.

“Despite not being very knowledgeable about it, I desperately studied about Arcadia after deciding I was going to come here.”

“This is incredible. Studying the language of a country so distant from your country Rushitania shouldn´t be something average.”

Willian´s back was soaked in sweat. The other three were listening to their conversation as they ate their food; they couldn´t even begin to understand the tension Willian was feeling right now.

“However, why is it Arcadia? It could have been Ostoberg, which is also one of the seven kingdoms. The closest to Rushitania of the seven kingdoms is the kingdom of Estaado, and walking a bit further from there, there should be the kingdom of Nehderks. If you want to rise to the top, then it should be the superpower, Garias, and by crossing the sea, there is also the developing kingdom of Arkland. I am having the feeling there aren´t any reasons for you to have chosen Arcadia.”

Willian also used to have the same doubts about this question. Why had Willian chosen Arcadia. Willian wasn´t a person to leave such a question that would definitely be asked to him buried.

“…My explanation for that might sound a little rude, though.”

Willian was making a humble face. Looking at it, Louran uttered an “Oh”, with his increasing interest showing on his voice.

“The superpower, the kingdom of Garias, is less than average for raising your fame. There aren´t many countries that would pick up a fight with that country, so there aren´t any opportunities to get achievements there. Even if I raise my name at the developing country of Arkland, I will still have my doubts on whether I would be able to go back to my home. And not to mention, the kingdom of Estaado had been known for having invaded my country a long time ago… The remaining choice is either Arcadia, Ostoberg or Nehderks. But between those three… there is a decisive difference that sets it all.”

Willian was smoothly giving his explanation. Everything was the pure truth Willian had heard from the [person himself]. There weren´t any reasons to be anxious about that. There was no doubts all this was the truth.

“The difference would be on how foreigners are treated. Compared to Arcadia, who consider foreigners as people of their own country, giving them the title of third class citizens, Ostoberg and Nehderks at most treat foreigners as nothing more than foreigners. I left my country to make a name for myself. In that case, I think it is inevitable that the place I need to enlist myself at is Arcadia.”

He didn´t put in even a single lie. If there were any lies found, he would be seen as nothing more than a scammer. However, even with that said, the identification documents were still making lies become the truth…

“You are quite the ambitious person.”

Ainhart said..

“I am grateful for the compliment.”

Willian bowed his head to Ainhart.

“Fumu, perhaps it is as you say. Arkland if there is the opportunity for it, and Arcadia otherwise… Ah, sorry for having asked you so many things. The dinner could have ended up getting cold. Now then, please eat to your heart´s content.”

As if the questioning had ended for the time, Loulan declared that Willian could go back to eating his dinner. Willian nodded. Now, all the people that were present at the place had their mind focused on the food.

“Ah, could I ask you one last thing?”

“…?”

Willian finally became relieved. But that was until Louran talked to him again, as if he had seen through that and was only waiting for the timing.

“Isn´t Karl a nuisance for you who is so ambitious?”

In an instant, the mood of the room became petrified. Karl loudly stood up from his seat.

“…What are… you saying?”

Willian was at loss for words. It was obvious. There was no way he could answer that question in his current situation. It was inevitable he would get Karl´s dislike by that. In result of that, as far as the influence Karl had as the son of a noble, it would an easy feat for him to have a single foreigner murdered.

“Yes, please don´t mind about that. It´s just that I don´t like very much that Karl is going to war. Like Ainhart had said before, he is a scholar, and because of that, he won´t accept becoming the heir. In order words, Karl must be the one to succeed the Teirah household. I want him to learn things about the business we do, and if he is going to give up on that, it would be best if he does so early on.”

Karl was about to glare at his father, but because Louran´s gaze was by far much sharper, Karl was suppressed without him even having the chance to say any word. As to be expected, there was no comparison.

“I am aware that Karl doesn´t have talents that suit the military. Let´s put an end to this dream. I will entrust my son to you. If it is your words, he might be able to wake up. Could you make him give up?”

Karl was looking at Willian with eyes that asked for help. Willian swallowed the saliva in his mouth.

This was an extremely difficult situation for Willian. If he was to stand for Karl, he wouldn´t do so for Louran, and if he was to stand for Louran, he wouldn´t do so for Karl. In terms of power, it was clear the Louran was the one most powerful. In that case, it was only logical that Willian needed to follow Louran´s will.

“”However, resentment from that will remain. The feeling of trust that Karl has right now will be destroyed, and the moment this turns into hatred, all the violations I had done will become a big vulnerability…”(TL note: Not sure about that because the word used here is ->shippai<-, which usually translates to failure or mistake. If that was the case, it wouldn´t really make sense…)

Willian had committed violations before. They were things Karl had ignored. At the present moment, it could be said that he doesn´t mind about them, but it was inevitable that he would change his mind about that if he was to be betrayed. For all the trust he had, his anger would only become more intense.

“”To begin with, is there any necessity for me to stand on Louran´s side? If he really wanted to have Karl stay away from the battlefield, my opinion would have been unnecessary. At most, all this is only feigned. However, those are only assumptions. In either case, I will face against both of their opinions!””

Willian looked at Karl for only an instant. Karl head was hanging down. He was biting his lips, having his clenched hands trembling, and he was also making a frustrated face. Karl was aware of it. He knew that he didn´t have any talent. Since he had gone to war, he ended up becoming aware of it…

Willian let out a small sigh. It was as if he was making sure whether it was really fine to do what he was about to.

“Karl-sama…”

Karl became surprised in reaction. Louran looked at Willian with a composed attitude.

And then, Willian said…

“Karl-sama. No, Karl… I need you!”

Willian had set his resolve. Karl became moved by those words.

“At that time I still didn´t know you were from a noble family, I was about to betray you. In the middle of the battle, I didn´t have the spare time even for myself and many of our companions were in danger too. I was hesitant whether it was right for me to go save only Karl himself despite everyone else, so I averted my eyes from you for one time. Even if I saved you in the end, it is the reality that I had been about to leave you to your death. Without any twists to the truth, it is a fact that I had hesitated at that time.”

Because of the sudden confession, aside from Ainhart and Lutogarde, even Louran had his eyes open wide.

“Karl told the me who had abandoned him for that instant that I was his friend. He forgave the stupid me who had been about to leave him to his death; a simple foreigner and third class citizen like me. He even called me his friend. To me, Karl is a friend that is impossible to replace. It was the first bond I was able to make in this country.”

The first one to become surprised after hearing Willian´s confession was Karl himself. Willian continued his speech. He didn´t give him the time to think over what had been

said.

“Indeed, Karl might not have talent to be in the military. However, I believe that Karl has an even more important power. It is the power to bond people together, the power to have people open themselves, the power to gain the trust of people. This power perhaps might not be of any use to a solder. However, how would this fare for someone that commands? What if he was to stand above people? This definitely would become the most powerful talent to have over any other. Therefore, I absolutely need Karl!”

Willian declared. To be fair to himself, Willian didn´t have the confidence that this kind of route was even viable. Whether it was the correct answer for him to choose Karl´s side, or whether he should have chosen Louran´s side, or whether he should have dropped all the pretense to begin with, he didn´t know what he was supposed to do. The situation he was now wasn´t one he could make all of it off as a joke. The person he was dealing with also wouldn´t allow him. Loulan Von Teirah wasn´t soft to that point.

“But if he dies as a soldier, there won´t be any meaning to it.”

Louran´s cold words pierced through Willian.

“I will protect him. No matter what may happen, in the name of my motherland, and more than anything in the name of our friendship, I will protect him.”

Since he came all the way here, Karl would keep his stand even if he was to die. If he was to rub the lord in the wrong way, it would be fine for him to run away from the residence. Since he was close to the door, it would be possible for him to escape. He memorized the way outside the house. He had already gone his way to outside the kingdom too. It would be fine even if he was to get all covered with human shit for that sake.

“Father!”

Karl´s voice resounded through the room. Louran turned his frigid eyes away from Willian and now was looking at Karl.

“!?” (ッ！？)

Karl´s had pretty much never went against his father´s words. He had never received such a cold gaze from him before. But even so…

“I-I, indeed am weak. I became aware of the reality with the war. I am weak. It is a fact that won´t change. However, if I am together with Willian, I have the feeling I will be able to become stronger. I will become strong and be able to stand alongside him. I want to become a man worthy of being his friend. That´s why there is no way I can run away now! In the name of my friendship with Willian, he who said that I was necessary to him!”

Karl has for the first time gone against his father. This was different from a child that had been spoiled by his father and was now talking about his selfish desires. It was a firm opposition. Ainhart, his brother, was surprised. Those were caustic words that he would have never imagined coming out of Karl´s mouth.

“…Fumu. I am beaten. Well, I wasn´t being that much serious about it though.”

Before one´s notice, Louran´s eyes became mild. It was as if his cold gaze had been blown away, and that now the usual Loulan was the one sitting there.

“It´s fine, do as you wish. Sorry there, Willian-kun. I ended up having you caught with our family affairs. But it was really fortunate I asked you that. Thank you for becoming Karl´s friend.”

Karl blushed. He was giving glances to Willian. Becoming embarrassed, Willian averted his eyes from him. And due to that, Karl made a happy expression. (TL note: Is there a

hidden yaoi route there or something?)

“Only, you should think about the family´s business a little bit. Karl, since our company has many employees, please keep in your heart that we mustn´t let them be thrown to the roadside. Also, you must definitely not die. Can you promise me that?”

“Yes father!”

Becoming satisfied with Karl´s response, Louran turned his eyes to all the people in the room.

“Oh my, I am really sorry. Now then, let´s once again proceed with our dinner. If we let it cool down, our old caretaker will get angry at us.”

With a clap of his hands, although with a few difficulties, they went back to eating their dinner.

The strange mood from before faded away to its last pieces, but even so, Willian still couldn´t feel the taste of the food in the end.

☆

“You can use this room.”

After finishing the dinner, Karl guided Willian to one of the rooms of the second floor. Right now, both were standing in front of it.

“Thank you Karl.”

Willian extended his hand for a handshake. Karl happily took his hand.

“Don´t worry about it, Willian.”

Their friendship had been accepted by Karl´s father. If that wasn´t the case, it would have been impossible for him to have gone against the will of the head of the family. It was exactly because this would have normally been impossible that this friendship became mutual trust.

“Then, see you tomorrow.”

“Yes, see you tomorrow.”

The hands that were firmly holding each other now broke off, slowly leaving to each side. Both were looking at the position they were holding their hands with regretful eyes. Noticing that, Karl showed a happy smile while Willian showed a wry one.

“Good night, Willian.”

“Good night, Karl.”

The two of them went their own ways. Karl turned his head a few times as he waved his hand.

On the other hand, Willian just waved his hand for a little. After that, he entered inside the room that was given to him.

Leaning his back at the door…

“Fhuuuuu….”

Willian gave a very long sigh.

“I pulled it through, I guess.”

A feeling of coldness gradually started to embrace his back, which was now dry from all the sweat.

“The room next to mine has nobody living at. Because my room is at the corner, it should be fine even if I don´t pay too much mind about those things. This is enough. This should definitely be enough, myself.”

With his exhaustion coming at him all at once, Willian´s expression became a weak and completely exhausted one. It was an expression he wouldn´t show in front of anyone. Willian sluggishly walked towards his bed, and then he fell with his back onto it.

“I am much more tired than at those times in the battlefield. This shitty thing…”

His abusive language lacked its usual force.

“Those nobles… Are all of them jerks like that?”

Willian remembered about Louran´s surveying gaze and the conversation between them. Thinking back about it now, it was possible to imagine that their whole conversation had been a test to see if he could be trusted. This was the difference in

experience. All the people he had seen until now couldn´t be considered real actors.

“So that is how a baron, the fifth one, is like?”

The top was feeling even more distant to Willian.

“…Hm?”

The stairs were a bit far from his room, but even so, he was able to hear footsteps from there. That person who went up the stairs came towards his room and was now standing right in front of his door.

“…”

Fixing the position of his body, Willian turned his head to the door.

“You don´t need to open the door, Willian-kun.”

The owner of the voice was Louran. Willian´s feeling of tension increased.

“You are very smart. At that time, you were deciding which side to take; whether to take Karl´s or mine. ….No, since then, you´ve been choosing the most suitable words and actions all the time. You are smart; so very smart. But you might be a bit too much smart.”

Willian wasn´t able to say anything. Who in hell was the one that was now standing at the other side of his door? It was different from everything he had experienced until now.

“I don´t know what you were thinking by coming to this country. I am considering the story you´ve told us a bit ago with a grain of salt for now, but I am not softhearted enough to be believing in that. Isn´t it obvious? For a person like you that is so strong and intelligent, because of how excellent you are, there isn´t any reason for you to go to another country to begin with, or even for you to name yourself as a simple foreigner. The risk of making a name in another country makes doing that illogical; there wouldn´t be any reason for you to do that.

A cold feeling was going through Willian´s skin. It was a feeling that was similar to when Kail was preparing for battle or at the time he confronted with him.

“That´s why I cannot believe in your story.”

Forgetting even to gasp, Willian kept only staring at the door.

“However, I will recognize that you are very capable. In that time you are being Karl´s [friend], I believe you and I are going to become good friends.”

Willian was clenching his teeth. He had already been seen through. The reason for all the acting from before…

“Please be good friends with Karl. That child is too gentle and too simple-minded. I sincerely wish you won´t betray him. Alas, I don´t want to become your enemy.”

His opponent was too strong. The Willian of right now couldn´t compete. In the end, all he was able to protect was the lie called [Willian]. All the rest had been exposed.

“Sorry for having you follow that old man´s conversation. You should have got tired because of that, right? You should have a good rest.”

The presence that was at the other side of the door had vanished.

“Ah, that is bad. I can´t win against him.”

His complete exhaustion was showing in his face, but on the other hand, at that same face there was a smile.

“What a man. That Lord Tirah.”

Willian was acting very cautiously. However, Louran had been able to clearly see through his over cautious attitude. There was no mistake that Willian´s actions at that time had been very funny to him.

“”There was no meaning to all the cheap drama I engaged with Karl. No, perhaps for Karl there is a meaning to it.””

The response that inspired Karl. In result of that, Willian was able to win his trust, but the problem was on how Louran interpreted that. That was where the scary part was at. Only…

“”In short, would this mean that as long as I am protecting Karl and as long as I am being useful to the Tirah house, all that scene from before will be overlooked? Without giving any interest to my cheap drama, they only wanted to know whether I was going to protect Karl.””

War had value to the nobility. If their own son is serving the army, people would look differently at them. Willian didn´t know what Louran thought in regards of that, but there was no mistake that he wanted to draw in a win-win situation for the two of them.

“”Well, to me, this is definitely not a bad condition. They shouldn´t pursue the matter of me having abandoned him once, and for a foreigner like me, it is very nice for me to be under a noble family. I will make use of you as much as I can.””

Most of the reason why Willian gave that speech from before to inspire Karl was because not only Karl himself aimed for the top, but he also had useful qualities in him. From what Willian learned at their time at Raconia, it was definitely not a lie that Karl was necessary in other to make up for what Willian himself lacked. Because it was a win-win exchange, both would get the benefit. Willian believed in benefits; this was all there was to it.

“”Today´s defeat was a complete disaster. However, one day, I will definitely win against him.””

Willian extended his hand to the ceiling of his room.

For now, he needed to reach for that ceiling. Reaching his hand to the skies was something for later on.

[][]

Departure

Hyun* (ひゅっ)

The blade of the sword shone with a gleaming light, cutting through the morning mist.

“Sh, fuh, seyah.”(しっ、ふっ、せやっ)

At first, Willian would move by copying what he would find in the books. He would learn a whole page, then two, three, ten… The more he knew, the more he had for forming his own fighting style. He would read through the vast and deep world of books, test what he learned, and would decide whether he would adopt what he learned or not. And so…

“Ha!”

A beautiful and rational blade. This was Willian´s swordplay. It was the collection of his knowledge and testing.

Willian would train with his sword only when there was nobody around. It would be deep in the night or early in the morning. This was a habit he had since the time he used to be called Al, and it was a daily routine he wouldn´t skip even if it was raining, snowing or windy.

“…”

Willian had noticed long ago the gaze that was directed to him.

“Fuh.”

Willian wiped the considerable amount of sweat he got by training and turned his eyes to the direction of the gaze. The figure that was looking at him from the window hurriedly ran off.

"…I don´t really see how it is fun to watch me though."

It has been that way in those last few days. At the first time, the ones to watch him training were Karl, Ainhart, and even Louran himself.However, because Ainhart and Louran became tired of watching him train, they wouldn´t wake up early to watch his training anymore. Karl still wanted to train together with him, but when the time would come, he would be sleeping. The only remaining person was…

""Lutogarde…""

Since their first meeting, she hadn´t been able to look at him straight in his eyes, and besides, it was difficult for Willian to deal with her in his position. Just so she could have a peek at Willian, she would do all the effort of waking up early in the morning. Probably, the person herself still didn´t realise that Willian had already become aware of her.

""Even though they said she was shy with strangers. What is she thinking about.""

When Willian turned his eyes away, the gaze would suddenly come back. While feeling annoyed at the gaze he was receiving from his back, he kept pretending not to notice it.

""Well, this the last day. If I keep caring about that, I will be the one at loss."

☆

“Now then, I will be going!!”

Karl said his goodbyes in good spirits. Louran was waving his hand with a smile, Ainhart had only come to show his face, and Lutogarde was restlessly covering her face.

“Willian-kun, you too should take care.”

“Thank you for the concern.”

Willian deeply bowed his head. As if Ainhart didn´t have any particular interest in Willian, he didn´t even glance at him. To Willian, the fact he was receiving that kind of dry reception made him more at ease than otherwise.

“”The problem is…””

Willian´s eyes met with the ones of a certain someone that had been giving him glances since a few moments ago.

“Hya!?”

And in that same instant, she immediately looked away.

“”…It is Lutogarde.””

To the point it had already become a standard custom, just like always, Lutogarde was looking at Willian. It wasn´t a dignified look, but one that was closer to a peeking look. Besides that, if their eyes were to meet, she would turn her eyes away.

“”Really, what is she thinking… I have no idea.””

Pushing away all the troublesome thoughts, Willian kept his expressionless face.

“Ah, by the way, it seems that Lutogarde has something to give to you.”

Lutogarde became startled with Louran´s words. Then, she hesitantly curled up behind her elder brother and gave Karl a necklace that had a blue jewel at the center. Karl´s face became bright.

“Wah, it´s a sapphire. And it sparkles with the light… So as I expected, this is…!”

It had the beauty that even caught Willian´s attention. With light shining on it, it became even more beautiful. The “六条の光” six tones of light shone like stardust. This was an gem Willian, who had dealt with many merchants, has never seen. Moreover, the gold decoration enveloping it was also beautiful. No matter how much one was to sell this for, there would never be enough money for someone to buy it.(TL note: I can´t find what this means anywhere. I translated it to six tones of light, but I don´t think it really means that. It is probably a reference to something -.-)

“That sapphire… Is it fine, father? This is something that we are supposed to be selling, right?”

“The one who bought it and made the decoration was Lutogarde herself. Well, it is a protective charm, so I think it would lose effectiveness if you won´t get excited about it even if a little.”

Getting excited about it even if a little. Those words made Willian´s face twist for a second. If he was to sell that jewel, he would probably get enough money to buy a

stand-alone house here in Arkas. As to be expected, it is a bit lacking for one to be able to buy a house at the noble district, but even so, the argument was still valid. (TL note: I couldn´t find other word to describe it. For those that didn´t understand what I meant to say by stand-alone, it pretty much means that the house is like a normal house, and not an apartment that you would need to share the building with other people.”

“So, does this mean they would be able to get a much bigger house than the one they have?”

Even for nobles, something like that was expensive to the extent that one wouldn´t casually gift it away. But if that was the first campaign of their son, it might just happen. Just maybe though.

““…First campaign…. Well, I guess it is. The battles that will happen from now on will be on a different scale from the little skirmishes at Raconia. It is definitely not a gift you would give for your son to be a footsoldier on a skirmish.””

Willian deeply thought about it.

“Uh, ummm.”

While Willian was being distracted with his thoughts, Lutogarde approached him. Willian got surprised by that. And in reaction, Lutogarde also got surprised.

“Wh-what would it be, Lutogarde-sama.”

Seeing Willian´s cramped face, Louran laughed.

“I said Lutogarde had something to give you, didn´t I? This is your share. Of course, the decorations were handmade by Lutogarde herself.”

Lutogarde gave Willian the necklace while looking downwards.

“I-is this… for me?”

Willian´s eyes became wide-open by being given that. The words he uttered left his mouth in a trembling voice.

“Is it not good?”

“I-it´s not that!? Rather, for me to so suddenly be given such an expensive item!”

What was in front of his eyes was a deep crimson gem. There was a decoration made of silver enveloping it. The decoration made of silver by itself was already something that had the cost common people wouldn´t be able to pay. In addition to that, the crimson gem was a…

“Hou, is it a ruby? It looks like father is really daring.”

It couldn´t be helped that Ainhart became surprised about that. In this age, rubies were one of the most expensive gems, only next to diamond. Its price couldn´t be compared to a sapphire. The ruby was a rarity that couldn´t be found in the territories the seven kingdoms controlled. That was the main reason why its price had increased.

“Hm, this is something Lutogarde insisted me to do. She would say only a ruby would suit you and she wouldn´t hear anything I would say. She even said it was fine even if she had to sell all her jewels for that.”

With her face red in embarrassment, Lutogarde angrily looked at her father. Louran

made a wry smile and shook his head while saying “Good grief”.

“Please, accept it. She had already prepared the one for Karl beforehand, but yours was one she made in hurry. She also had prepared its design the day after she met you, and she probably pulled through the whole night at that. It will be very heart-breaking to her if you won´t accept it.”

Willian didn´t know what kind of face he should do right now. When Willian moved his trembling hand to get it, he ended up touching Lutogarde´s hand, which gave her a fright. However, right now, there was no way she could allow herself to act frightened. The size of the ruby, and also its color and shape were all nice. With only this gem, it is possible to build a whole mansion just like the ones around here.

“”This isn´t something you would gift a person you just recently met, you know!?””

Willian was looking at Louran. Louran was showing a happy smile.

“”…Is he planning on investing on me? It looks like I am valued absurdly high.””

Willian tightly grasped the ruby in his hand. A feeling of ardor that felt as if he was holding heat itself was going through his hand. The gem was only a inorganic substance. It had no consciousness. But even so, with how much of a rarity it is considered and also because of its colossal price, people would be welled up with excitement and start imagining things.

“Thank you very much, Lutogarde-sama, Louran-sama. I will definitely answer to your expectations.”

He would answer to them. What Louran probably wanted from Willian was for him to protect Karl. Even if he wasn´t given something like that, Willian had already intended on doing so, but now that he was gifted that, he once again made up his mind. this meant

that Karl had at least more value to Louran than this gem. If Willian was to make a blunder and fail at protecting Karl, he couldn´t even start imagining what kind of retribution would come.

“…Uhm, ma-may you have good fortune at war.”

“Ye-yes.”

“”In the end… I can´t understand what Lutogarde is thinking. Really, what is this person thinking about.””

While giving out that response, Willian was being held back by those complex feelings. It was easy to understand Louran´s intention. He wanted him to protect Karl, and in addition to that, be of use to the Teirah household. However, Willian couldn´t understand Lutogarde´s intentions at all.

“Hmph, giving the jewel to the man.”(TL note: ふーん、お手製の石を男にねえ It feels like he is telling about how Lutogarde was giving the “man” the “ring” when the man is the one that was supposed to be doing that.)

Lutogarde was glaring at Hainhart, who had thrown a remark of profound meaning. While saying “How scary”, Ainhart returned to the residence by himself. With blushing cheeks, Lutogarde, who was left behind, kept being silent.

“Then, shall we go, Willian?”

“Yes, that´s right, Karl.”

Both hanged the necklaces they received at their neck and looked south. From here, they wouldn´t be able to see it, but distant in that horizon was Raconia, which was the

place their campaign would happen.

“”Finally the opportunities are coming to me. If Karl, who is from the nobility, is promoted, I will naturally be promoted as well. If Karl advances forward, so will I. For now, let´s make our name in his shadow. And then, one day…”

Both Willian and Karl started to walk. Whether there was something ahead, nobody knew.

“I will be leaving Karl on your care.”

Louran was making a gentle face, but the voice he used to call for Willian felt like needles that were pricking him. While saying “Of course”, Willian showed a smile.

“”I will also eat him up. Isn´t that right, nee-san?””

The reflected light of the crimson gem that was waving by his chest made it look like it was burning. This expressed very well the scorching heat that was flaring up inside Willian´s heart.

“…Please, be safe.”

After seeing the two walked far enough so that her voice wouldn´t be heard by them, Lutogarde muttered. By her side, Louran could be seen making a complex face.

“”Now then, what will his existence bring to our family?””

Whether he would be a remedy or poison, Louran couldn´t know.

“By the way, Karl.”

Going through the gates of the noble district, the two of them were now walking through the residential district.

“Hm, what is it?”

Willian asked Karl one thing he had been wondering about.

“What does your family do for living? I´ve heard a bit that you own a company.”

The Teirah household was one that dealt with trading. Their family by itself didn´t amount to much, but the influence could clearly be seen. They were so filthy rich to the point of giving a ruby necklace to a complete stranger. This was something that made him wonder about it.

“Hm, our company deals with clothing and ornaments. We also work with the crafting of jewelry made of gold, silver and gems. Because of all that, the Teirah family is very popular. Lutogarde is also a very famous ornament designer. The daughter of a noble working makes up a bit of a bad reputation though.”

The surprising reality. Willian was finally able to understand. Many of the companies that dealt with jewelry and clothing that Willian knew of probably belonged to the Teirah household. It seems they are very rich. It is said that jewe business was something profitable even at normal occasions, and since that´s the business they deal with…

“I-I see… This is very incredible.”

Because of Willian´s reaction, Karl made an expression that was filled with mixed feelings.

“It isn´t that much. My father is only the third generation in the history of our family, and we don´t have any accomplishments in the military. As nobles, we are only second or third-rate.”

“”…You might be second-rate as a noble, but you probably have a lot of money when compared to other nobles. The Teirah family is incredible.””

Willian once again was made to understand how incredible the Teirah family was.

“”Well, maybe I was able to get a bit relieved only because he was just a baron, I guess.”

The top Willian aimed for was distant. For the moment, he needed to get achievements in the great war that was going to happen at Raconia.

[][]

The sword of Karl Von Teirah

"Wah, this is awesome."

The massive arcadian army crowded around the surroundings.

"There are three thousand footsoldiers, five hundred cavalry; in total, our numbers are three thousand five hundred. Right now, the army is organized in columns, but when the battle starts, the should change it into a more linear formation."

Willian spoke out about information he had took out of nowhere. Karl looked at Willian with admiration.

"We are the light infantry. We have the role of fighting in the front row. And…"

Willian looked behind him. What was in his sight was…

"… the heavy infantry are the stars of the battlefield. Our role is to stall until the heavy infantry arrives."

Heavy infantry. To both the kingdoms of Arcadia and Ostoberg, the heavy infantry was definitely the star of the battlefield. They had the most powerful fighting strength and were regarded more highly than cavalry. The heavy infantry was essentially the regular army of the kingdom; the soldiers of career would be at this branch. Because of that, they were provided with equipment of high power and top quality. That fighting powress was respected throughout the whole world.

"The soldiers of Arcadia are the ones wearing white armor and the Ostoberg ones are the ones wearing the black armor, right?"

“That´s right. Well, once we cross to the other side of that hill, you would be seeing them even if you didn´t want to.”

The two of them were positioned in the middle of the front row. The ten man squad they were assigned to was a group that was composed of survivors from Raconia. Taking into consideration their experience with surviving a defeat, they were positioned in this place.

“”Generally, the ones positioned in the front rows are the ones that lack experience. We are survivors, and besides, most of the people that had more experience than us died. Because of that, this position… isn´t bad.”

The front row started to get restless. The enemy troops probably entered in their sight. The leading cavalry and scout cavalry were coming and going by the side of the army Willian and Karl were part of. This kind of anxiousness was part of the battlefield. The feeling of extreme excitation naturally came to Willian.

“”Calm down me. If I became too excited, I will be killed. I need to have my head cooled down more than anyone and carry on with composure during the fight.””

“We need to hide our charms deep inside our clothes.”

Willian was able to confirm one more time the reason why he was able to keep calm. (TL note: Referring to the ruby…)

“Yes. This is to prevent the enemies from stealing it from us, right?”

Karl put his hand at the center of his chest. At that place, the important thing he was entrusted with by his family was there.

“Correct. Besides, even our allies would want those gems. It´s not like only the enemies that are dangerous. For now, there is no reason for us to give the small fries an impression that will be troublesome for us.”

“”That said, if we can´t stand out in a good way, my plans won´t work out.”

And at the same time Willian was pondering about that…

“Ah!?”

A mass of black color appeared in front of the eyes of the two. Those weren´t at a distance the two would already need to be engaging them, but they weren´t at a distance that the two were safe. Before one´s notice, the front row that used to have considerable fighting power was now having it toned down. Karl, who was standing beside Willian, was trembling. This kind of feeling of intimidation. This was what war is.

“”That is no good. That is no good, me.””

But on the contrary to that, among all those people…

“”This is no good; it is really bad nee-san!”

there was a person that was becoming excited by the pressure.

That person knew of pain more than anyone in that battlefield. He would drink muddy water and would live like a rat. He would scramble around at trash and would be oppressed just by trying to live. As if living was some kind of punishment, and as if it was only natural that he was supposed to serve under others; that was how the young man defined such kind of life.

“…Willian?”

A life of continuing to be stolen of everything. A little while ago, he was finally standing at the side of the ones that would steal away things. But it wasn´t enough. He was lacking too much. His most beloved person was stolen away. Everything from his life was stolen away.

“Are you… smiling?”

He himself was superior. People have taken away many things from him, who is strong. In retribution of that, he needed to break this world down. If he didn´t steal back something of equal valor to his sister, the trade off wouldn´t be fair.

“No, I am not smiling, Karl. Calm down. You must definitely not go away from me.”

“Ye-yes!”

In that case, he should steal. He should steal everything of this world.

“”Ah, nee-san. The masses are crawling like insects. Dullards, dullards, dullards; it is a flock of dullards. They are much inferior than me, who was labelled as a slave. If so, it isn´t enough. Even if I get all of them, it wouldn´t be enough. Compared to all the happiness that was stolen from us, trash people like those won´t even account for anything.””

There was no mistake the one that was the most insane in this battlefield was that man. The slave named Al died, and the freed slave that was also called Al also died. The one that was standing here now was…

“Now then, let´s eat up all of them!”

It was a white beast that had lost even the name he had stolen.

This was the true meaning that campaign had for Willian Rivius.

☆

“Is it fine if we stay here like that, Willian!?”

“Yes, it is fine.”

It was a mayhem. They were facing the enemy head-on. It was a clash that dispensed any kind of scheming. The ones to charge at them first were the knights, which were the diversion. After them, it was the light infantry, which had then led to that direct confront. At the current situation, the light infantry of both armies were entangled onto each other in the center of the war.

In the midst of that, Willian and Karl were calmly fighting in the middle row they were positioned at. Sometimes they would need to engage with an enemy that would come at them with his sword, but before they could approach Karl, Willian, who was standing next to him would bisect the enemy with swift movements. The war was clearly much slower-paced when compared to their previous battle.

“Even if they do their best in the first clashes, all that would happen is death. Not only the enemies, but allied arrows and javelins would be showering at them. Being right at the front isn´t something good. It is good everything is still flowing well. To the point I can´t find any faults.”

Karl was hesitant about the fact, but the risks of being at the front lines weren´t worth

the military gains. That was the case specially because of the mutual preliminary test of the first clash. The ones that are fast to die out are the light infantry. They wouldn´t be able to get any heads that would be worth anything at the first phases of the war.

“”Now then, this should be over soon . Which of them will make the first move?””

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“Interesting.”

There was something that caught the man´s eyes.

[][]

The sword of Karl Von Teirah

"Wah, this is awesome."

The massive arcadian army crowded around the surroundings.

"There are three thousand footsoldiers, five hundred cavalry; in total, our numbers are three thousand five hundred. Right now, the army is organized in columns, but when the battle starts, the should change it into a more linear formation."

Willian spoke out about information he had took out of nowhere. Karl looked at Willian with admiration.

"We are the light infantry. We have the role of fighting in the front row. And…"

Willian looked behind him. What was in his sight was…

"… the heavy infantry are the stars of the battlefield. Our role is to stall until the heavy infantry arrives."

Heavy infantry. To both the kingdoms of Arcadia and Ostoberg, the heavy infantry was definitely the star of the battlefield. They had the most powerful fighting strength and were regarded more highly than cavalry. The heavy infantry was essentially the regular army of the kingdom; the soldiers of career would be at this branch. Because of that, they were provided with equipment of high power and top quality. That fighting powress was respected throughout the whole world.

"The soldiers of Arcadia are the ones wearing white armor and the Ostoberg ones are the ones wearing the black armor, right?"

“That´s right. Well, once we cross to the other side of that hill, you would be seeing them even if you didn´t want to.”

The two of them were positioned in the middle of the front row. The ten man squad they were assigned to was a group that was composed of survivors from Raconia. Taking into consideration their experience with surviving a defeat, they were positioned in this place.

“”Generally, the ones positioned in the front rows are the ones that lack experience. We are survivors, and besides, most of the people that had more experience than us died. Because of that, this position… isn´t bad.”

The front row started to get restless. The enemy troops probably entered in their sight. The leading cavalry and scout cavalry were coming and going by the side of the army Willian and Karl were part of. This kind of anxiousness was part of the battlefield. The feeling of extreme excitation naturally came to Willian.

“”Calm down me. If I became too excited, I will be killed. I need to have my head cooled down more than anyone and carry on with composure during the fight.””

“We need to hide our charms deep inside our clothes.”

Willian was able to confirm one more time the reason why he was able to keep calm. (TL note: Referring to the ruby…)

“Yes. This is to prevent the enemies from stealing it from us, right?”

Karl put his hand at the center of his chest. At that place, the important thing he was entrusted with by his family was there.

“Correct. Besides, even our allies would want those gems. It´s not like only the enemies that are dangerous. For now, there is no reason for us to give the small fries an impression that will be troublesome for us.”

“”That said, if we can´t stand out in a good way, my plans won´t work out.”

And at the same time Willian was pondering about that…

“Ah!?”

A mass of black color appeared in front of the eyes of the two. Those weren´t at a distance the two would already need to be engaging them, but they weren´t at a distance that the two were safe. Before one´s notice, the front row that used to have considerable fighting power was now having it toned down. Karl, who was standing beside Willian, was trembling. This kind of feeling of intimidation. This was what war is.

“”That is no good. That is no good, me.””

But on the contrary to that, among all those people…

“”This is no good; it is really bad nee-san!”

there was a person that was becoming excited by the pressure.

That person knew of pain more than anyone in that battlefield. He would drink muddy water and would live like a rat. He would scramble around at trash and would be oppressed just by trying to live. As if living was some kind of punishment, and as if it was only natural that he was supposed to serve under others; that was how the young man defined such kind of life.

“…Willian?”

A life of continuing to be stolen of everything. A little while ago, he was finally standing at the side of the ones that would steal away things. But it wasn´t enough. He was lacking too much. His most beloved person was stolen away. Everything from his life was stolen away.

“Are you… smiling?”

He himself was superior. People have taken away many things from him, who is strong. In retribution of that, he needed to break this world down. If he didn´t steal back something of equal valor to his sister, the trade off wouldn´t be fair.

“No, I am not smiling, Karl. Calm down. You must definitely not go away from me.”

“Ye-yes!”

In that case, he should steal. He should steal everything of this world.

“”Ah, nee-san. The masses are crawling like insects. Dullards, dullards, dullards; it is a flock of dullards. They are much inferior than me, who was labelled as a slave. If so, it isn´t enough. Even if I get all of them, it wouldn´t be enough. Compared to all the happiness that was stolen from us, trash people like those won´t even account for anything.””

There was no mistake the one that was the most insane in this battlefield was that man. The slave named Al died, and the freed slave that was also called Al also died. The one that was standing here now was…

“Now then, let´s eat up all of them!”

It was a white beast that had lost even the name he had stolen.

This was the true meaning that campaign had for Willian Rivius.

☆

“Is it fine if we stay here like that, Willian!?”

“Yes, it is fine.”

It was a mayhem. They were facing the enemy head-on. It was a clash that dispensed any kind of scheming. The ones to charge at them first were the knights, which were the diversion. After them, it was the light infantry, which had then led to that direct confront. At the current situation, the light infantry of both armies were entangled onto each other in the center of the war.

In the midst of that, Willian and Karl were calmly fighting in the middle row they were positioned at. Sometimes they would need to engage with an enemy that would come at them with his sword, but before they could approach Karl, Willian, who was standing next to him would bisect the enemy with swift movements. The war was clearly much slower-paced when compared to their previous battle.

“Even if they do their best in the first clashes, all that would happen is death. Not only the enemies, but allied arrows and javelins would be showering at them. Being right at the front isn´t something good. It is good everything is still flowing well. To the point I can´t find any faults.”

Karl was hesitant about the fact, but the risks of being at the front lines weren´t worth

the military gains. That was the case specially because of the mutual preliminary test of the first clash. The ones that are fast to die out are the light infantry. They wouldn´t be able to get any heads that would be worth anything at the first phases of the war.

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The centurion VS the white beast

“I-impossible.”

The black armored crumbled down. The white beast glared at them.

“Yes, thank you for the effort.”

Willian was dancing at the battlefield. Most of the black armored bodies lying on the ground were an army of dead bodies Willian created himself. Both enemies and allies couldn´t recklessly move. It was only a single part; only a small part of the battlefield. But even so, that was a part Willian completely ruled over.

“Guh! How dare you.”

The ones that were just defeated was a ten-man heavy infantry squad of Ostoberg. For the heavy infantry, which all of its soldiers were regulars of the army, a ten man squad was definitely not a small number. It wasn´t a small number, but even so…

“”It´s not enough.””

Right now, Willian was risking himself. He was taking the risk of making himself stand out too much while fighting at the frontlines. He was obviously scared of being surrounded and taken down, but the chance of friendly fire from behind was also very possible. It was a considerably risky situation for him.

“”I can avoid the risks with my abilities. I can simply act whenever necessary. Now is the time. And so, I want a better recommendation. But for that, it is still not enough.”

Soon, he would need to pull back. The vanguard army seemed like it was going to be broken, and soon it would be the time for the heavy infantry, which were the tigers of Arcadia. There was a limit for how long Willian could act.

""Come, come, come!""

Willian prayed. Even if he killed that many, all it would happen was that everything he did would simply become evaluation for the small fries around him. Because of that, his deeds wouldn´t reach the ears of the top-brass. He wouldn´t be able to reach out for them. What he needed was something that would certainly spread his name. This was something that was impossible for him to get his hands on no matter how many small fries he killed.

""Come!""

He needed a head.

"Hey, hey, it looks like you´ve been making my subordinates suffer quite a bit, aren´t you?"

The mood completely changed.

"Willian!"

Karl´s voice filled with worry the reached his ears.

""I know that. Now, it seems you´ve finally revealed yourself, centurion!""(TL note: Centurion =A hundred man commander)

A centurion. If one was to go find similarities between Arcadia and Ostoberg, it would be that their core army was their heavy infantry. That core army was divided in squads of a hundred man, and the ones who commanded those were called centurions. In the battlefield, they were the stars among the stars. If Willian was to take the head of one, it would be possible to raise his name in one go.

“You have quite the showy hair, brat. Did you dye it?”

The man was lump of self confidence. However, Willian would definitely…

“”He isn´t just a fox that made his way there by borrowing authority.”

This one wasn´t a simple fake. Until now, Willian´s opponents had only been soldiers of the heavy infantry division. However, the man in front of his eyes wasn´t simply only a single man. He was the man that commanded a strong army. It was the man that would mold his army with strength.

“Centurion of Ostoberg´s heavy infantry division, my name is Haian Von Krokkas.”

“Soldier of the Arcadian light infantry, sword of Karl Von Teirah, Willian Rivius.”

The two of them named themselves. There was a overwhelming difference in their character. Haian was surrounded by many black shinigami. Willian was only a simple soldier. Perhaps this would seen like a funny play for the people watching from the sidelines.

“You have a nice spirit. Come.”

An oppressing aura surrounded Haian.

“”…This thing once again?”

A cold feeling assaulted Willian. It was the feeling he felt when he fought against Kail. Although it was of a different nature, he had also felt the same feeling from Lord Teirah and the air that wafted around that noble district.

“…Really, I can´t understand.”

Willian sighed in a way that couldn´t be considered him either letting out a sigh or gasping.

“Won´t you come?”

“…I will.”

The warning Kail gave him etched in his mind. He shouldn´t fight people that gave off this kind of cold feeling. However…

““If I take the risk…. I will be able to go to the top!””

There was no way Willian could stop. His heart screamed him to go forward. The ardor in his stomach increased. Eat, eat, eat, eat. Something inside him was insanely screaming that.

“Hyu!*”(ひゅッ！)

“”Besides, I´m not feeling the same amount of cold I felt from Kail! Physique, technique; there are no factors that suggest I will lose. I can win!””

Therefore, Willian advanced forward. Like always, he charged, attacking at the gap of the armor and aiming for the neck.

“You are very light, white brat.”

“!?”

Haian blocked Willian´s attack that would have brought death if it hit too much easily. In a rational way, the attack went through the shortest trajectory to hit, and therefore it was the fastest Willian could bring. It was the sword that represented the accumulation of much knowledge and training. This sword was stopped.

“Sorah!”(そオらッ！)

Haian forcibly came out from his position of having blocked the attack and swung his big sword at Willian.

Willian´s eyes became wide-open. Both were pushing their swords on each other, but Willian had the advantage in the stance. In terms of physique, Willian was only slightly unfavored, but there was no way there could have been so much difference. There was no way Willian, who had been training his body, could be falling behind in strength for that much.

“I said so, didn´t I? That you are [light].”

“!?”

Despite all that, Willian felt confused. The disadvantageous stance of his opponent, the rationality, and everything else too was blown away. Willian was overthrown and was blown away in the same way.

“”Wait… a second.””

Willian couldn´t follow what was happening. Because of that delay…

“You don´t have the time to be dazing around!”

An opening Willian would normally not have given away appeared. It was a diagonal slash that went by the books. Even though he was in panic, he was able to properly ready his sword with both hands and protect his head. Blocking the attack, he slashed back…

“Gah!?”

Or so he had intended to. In the end, the result was that the skin of his neck was slightly cut and his body was sent flying. Even if his stance was hadn´t been good, the attack that he was supposed to have completely blocked was too much heavy.

“This… impossible!”

Willian couldn´t have imagined that there would be so much difference between them simply because Haian had better strength. He couldn´t see the difference between the build of their bodies. But even so…

“”Why does the gap feels so big!?””

An one-sided defensive battle. Willian was gritting his teeth. It wasn´t supposed to be like that. He was supposed to win and ascertain how superior he himself was. He was strong. And now, it was when he was supposed to be confirming that fact. That was what should have happened.

“Don´t you know? You don´t know, right? Your sword is light. Your own existence is light. You didn´t go through any trouble in your life, you see.”

His life… was light.

“You can stop acting all brave now. You are indeed very good. Your swordplay is beautiful and your movements were impressive. Your physique isn´t bad. But that´s all. You aren´t [strong]!”

While he was blocking the attacks, Willian had his head hanging down.

His heart exploded.

There was no way Willian could tolerate the things the man in front of his eyes was babbling. Willian had lived a life he had to drink water from the ditch. He lost his sister and was now living for the sake of vengeance. He had been desperately accumulating knowledge, and besides that, he also trained his body. He had the confidence he had lived the most effective way possible. He would brag he lived while making use of every moment of his life.(TL note: Not sure about this last line. 最短を生きてきた自負がある。)

“…op”

Willian was superior than others. It was fine even if he wasn´t a genius. He didn´t mind

even if he didn´t have any talents. It would be enough if he was just a normal person. A simple slave that had trained himself while aiming for the skies. He desperately trained, not letting even one second go to waste. He desperately used up everything all for being able to improve himself. There was no way someone like [him]…

"ShUt Up."

There was no way [he] was lower than someone of the level of the man in front of his eyes.

"Th-this guy!? Were you hiding such face all along!?"

It was a face his allies behind him couldn´t see. Haian didn´t know what the thing in front of him was.

"I am awesome, you know, nee-san!? We are better than anyone! So watch thiiss."

"St-stop kidding me! There is, there is no way someone like this…!?"

Willian pushed away the sword. It was the completely opposite of the fight that was happening moments ago. The surroundings didn´t know what was happening there. All they knew was that Willian was pushing Haian back. They understood it. But despite that, nobody was able to move.

They continued to fight, and after the sword reached next to Haian´s neck, he couldn´t act anymore.

A feeling of dread wrapped around the battlefield. Those were scorching feelings. Haian was being buried by the strong pressure that surrounded him.

"ThaANkSsS fOr The MeALLLLLLLLLLLLLLL."

Hopelessness could be seen in Haian´s face. He was pushed down, and as his neck was eaten by the blade, his meat was raising sounds of being split apart. Calmly, steadily, with any resistance being in vain…

"Sto- save me!"

The flesh blood dyed the two of them. The white beast was dyed in red. It was a red, a crimson and beautiful beast.

"See, in the end I was superior."

The allied soldiers didn´t know of the expression he was making. However, the soldiers of Ostoberg could see that face.

It was a beautiful and terrifying thing. It was to the point one would have to swallow a mouthful of saliva after looking at it. They couldn´t believe that [thing] with a face full of ecstasy and bathed in blood was of the same race of them. It was as beautiful as it was insane…

The white beast stood alone in the battlefield.

“W-willian?”

Karl timidly spoke to Willian. He couldn´t understand what happened, but he could more or less see that that was an unnatural situation. However…

“Hm? What is the matter, Karl-sama?”

The face Willian had when he turned his head to him was his usual one. His hair and clothes were dyed in red, but it was the usual Willian that stood there.

“Please, take this.”

Willian cut off Haian´s neck into a proper shape and threw it to Karl´s hands. Karl took the head in panic. That face with dead eyes made Karl want to throw up.

“Did something happen?”

The Arcadian heavy infantry finally arrived after all this time. They made a puzzled face because of the weird mood that wafted around the place.

Willian showed a happy smile.

“Karl Von Teirah has taken down the centurion Haian Von Krokkas!”

The well sounded voice echoed through battlefield. As to be expected, when looking at the battlefield as a whole, it had been only a small part of it. However, all the people that were present at the place had the name of Karl Von Teirah carved in their memory. The voice that declared that had both a charming power and a devilish feeling one couldn´t resist.

“Wai-, Willian!? It wasn´t me, but yo…”

Even if Karl raised his voice in order to correct the misunderstanding, it was already too late…

“Uoooohhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Many loud cheering voices resounded. Willian drew Karl´s sword and stuck it at Haian´s head. When confirming it was firmly stuck into the sword, he had Karl hold it and have it displayed to the soldiers.

The bursting shouts of joy became even stronger.

“A lowly light infantry soldier killed a centurion of the heavy infantry army?”

The white heavy infantry had this doubt in their minds. Willian stood in front of Karl.

“This person is the son of a baron, you know? I, Willian Rivius, won´t tolerate the disrespect of looking at Karl-sama in the same eyes of simple light infantry soldier.”

The son of a baron. In other words, a noble. Most of the heavy infantry soldiers were common civilians. Karl´s military position was lower than theirs, but in terms of hierarchy set by the state, Karl was overwhelmingly ahead of them.

“Wh-why is the son of a noble together with the light infantry army?”

Seeing that the soldier was backing off, Willian looked at him with eyes of scorn.

“This is something the likes of you don´t need to know. Let´s go, Karl-sama.”

Willian extended his hand to Karl. Karl hesitated.

“Eh, but, for us to be going as we please….”

“The light infantry is supposed to pull back when it is time for the heavy infantry to burst in. Or could Karl-sama be intending to have the light infantry keep fighting?”

It was an argument one couldn´t say anything against. To begin with, the heavy infantry was late to take the place of the light infantry because of the confusion at the rear. But even in that case, Willian normally wouldn´t be someone that would be able to leave the battlefield as he wished. However, right now, he had actual results(the head of a centurion) and Karl (a noble) to back him up. Therefore, they could go.

“Then, let´s go.”

“Ye-yes.”

Willian and Karl leisurely went to the backlines. The astonishing thing wasn´t only that Ostoberg had its command killed, but the Arcadian army itself. It was that much of a striking duel. And the victory went to Arcadia. After that, shouts of cheer that were as if they had already won the battle itself kept resounding.

The heavy infantry, which until now had remained unused, appeared unexpectedly, and the Ostoberg army, which had already been losing their momentum, was pushed back. The ones to make up for the mistakes of this first battle was the heavy infantry. The white army divided the Ostoberg army in two from the [center], which was where the Ostoberg army hadn´t been able to push through for some reason. They were successfully able to break in at the center of their army.

Because of this battle, the one to seize the initiative of the field was decided.

The first war of the first campaign of both Willian and Karl ended up in victory after a turnaround.

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A night of reflection

Willian was somewhere a bit away from the encampment by himself.

By glancing through the field, it could be seen the soldiers getting drunk, cheering for their victory. However, Willian didn´t have the spare time to being happy about his victory or to be having a taste of the high-grade beverages of victory.

“”How… did I win?””

Instead, his complexion was bad. He was very pale.

“”My memories are missing. From what I can remember… I was in the disadvantage. No, it would be fine to say that I had already lost.””

What Willian was trying to remember about was about his one-to-one fight with the centurion Haian. He didn´t have the confidence that he was going to win then, but he betted it would have been a good battle. The result ended in his victory, but he didn´t have memories about that.

“”By going on what I asked from Karl, he said I won by sheer power, but… Is something like that really possible?””

It would have been one thing if the case was in technique, but in case of strength, there should have been an overwhelming gap between them.

“”To begin with, I can´t understand how I am at disadvantage in strength. Did he train just like I did? Did he have the same knowledge I did? That man?”

Willian thought it was impossible. But when he thought about, his confidence wavered. He, who worked at a bookshop of imported books that would gather the information of all the seven kingdoms, had carefully examined the necessary information. To say nothing about it, there wasn´t much difference in the apparent form of their physiques.

“”I even took care about my nutrition by eating that disgusting as shit food at Raconia. I was supposed to be working with a body of the same type of build that man had. Even if I was to be a bit worse on strength, there shouldn´t have been that much of a [disparity].”

He had been sent flying. He was completely beaten up. It was to the point he couldn´t do anything about it…

“”That feeling of chill I felt from Kail before was similar to that one I felt from him… Would [that] be the key here?””

Normally, this would simply be some stupid occultish kind of thing Willian would have refused to believe. To Willian, who had trained himself in a rational manner, that was an inexplicable wall he had never bumped at before. However, now that he actually tried to overcome it and had lost his awareness while trying to do so, there was no way he could let it by.

“”Something that wasn´t in any book. Something that was present only in actual battles. That thing Kail and that man possess…. I need to have my hands on that. As soon as I can.””

His situation was one close to having no clues. Willian didn´t know how he was supposed to investigate about something that wasn´t written in books.

“”Well, let´s ask Kail. Will he teach me, that guy?””

After thinking about Kail, someone that wouldn´t be lenient when it was about swordfighting, Willian showed a little smile. In the end, no matter where he was to go, those two people were his home. Nothing would change that. Even when he was to die, it would definitely not…

“”Even if I let this by for now, it is still not good that I have missing memories. It is very bad in fact.””

Sometimes, Willian would lose his awareness. At the times it was at its worse, he would even lose his memories. There were many times it happened for short periods of time. It would happen at the times during his trainment with Kail, and also at the times he would get too much agitated. Because those would happen for very short period of times, Willian didn´t mind too much about it. Kail had also told him not to worry about it as well.

“”But now that something like this happened, there is no way I can keep ignoring this.””

Now that Willian thought about it, he couldn´t hide his surprise at how he hadn´t made any measures about it until now.

“”What became of me, really.”

He lost sight of himself. Willian, who had been taking many meticulous precautions during his life had overlooked such a big hole. In a certain way, this gave much more of a shock to Willian than the time he had been defeated at the duel.

“…”

Suddenly, Willian turned his eyes to the small lump that was at his chest. He held the

thing that was by his chest.

It was the red like blood ruby, which ardently burned in red. If a diamond had the brilliance of the stars, then the ruby would be the sun which stood over the sky. That ardence was similar to the ardent feelings of people.

“This is supposed to suit me, right?”

It was the ruby that Lutogarte insisted in giving him. He didn´t think too deeply about that, but now he got a bit interested about the reason why it had been a ruby rather than something else.

“”It would be easier for me if those “feelings of ardor” was something she found in my childish third-rate play.”

However, would Lutogarde really insist so much for it to be something as much expensive as the ruby with feelings of this extent?

“…Does she favor me? No, it lacks too many points for that to be true no matter how much she had done for me.”

No matter how much Willian searched through his mind, he definitely had never confronted with a girl like Lutogarde in the past. Even at the time he used to be called Al, there weren´t any of this kind of memories….

“Well, I guess it doesn´t really matter.”

Pushing away all thoughts, Willian put the gem that was supposedly given him because it suited him inside his clothes. Those things about Lutogarde were only trivial. Comparing to the piles of problems he had right now in front of his eyes, its priority was lower. To

be said frankly, to Willian, Lutogarde´s existence didn´t matter.

“My missing memories and the power that doesn´t make any sense; my problems lie in those two points.”

Willian shouldn´t spare his resources into thinking about Lutogarde´s feelings. Deciding that was the right call, he started to think of his priorities.

“Now then, what should I do?”

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The shine of the hero

With their victory, the Arcadian army was able to push in to Raconia. The morale of the army of Ostoberg was definitely not high; after having some battles between the them, the situation became one that they had to hold their defenses at Raconia. The one that had been having the superiority in the skirmishes and at the defensive war at Raconia was Arcadia.

“The situation of the battle doesn´t seem to move.”

The few words Karl muttered were about the siege.

The fort of Raconia wasn´t a fort that was that much strong, but even so, as a fort, it served its purpose. It had a stone wall that surrounded the fort, and while its gates were made of wood, they were massive, and wouldn´t be easily destroyed.

As for the ways of attacking into the fort, the most basic one was to shoot arrows from the distance, and during that gap of time, have the soldiers place ladders at the wall. This was the basic way of attacking into a fort, but because carrying on with the basics was all it was possible to do at their current situation, it couldn´t be said that it was going well. It was commonly said that it was necessary for the attacking side to have about three times more the army strength, but who would have thought that [this saying] was the literal description of their present situation.

“Just like those times before, these ones from this time are retar… aren´t very intelligent.”

“Retar… what?”

Puzzled, Karl asked.

“Don´t worry about it. Ah, see that they are starting to put the ladders there? It is a honor to raise achievements, and the ones that do receive a treatment proportional to that. That´s what those guys that are clinging at the ladder are aiming at.”

As their conversation was smoothly flowing, Willian pointed his finger at the people that were hurrying to go up the ladders like it was first serve first come.

“However, there aren´t really many stories of these kind of things having success.”

The ladder where his finger was being pointed at had been taken down by a soldier from the Ostoberg side. Karl gasped. Willian looked at the allied soldiers falling down with a disappointed gaze, having already already given up hope on them.

“The chance for successfully raising achievements is low. The risk is also big. Now that the situation is leaning towards us, we, who have already raised enough achievements, do not need to raise more of them.”

Because of that, the two of them gave detailed instructions to the people of the ten man squad they were part of, and so they were slowing down their own march in purpose. During the time at this war, they were already able to win this much authority. What happened about the noble Karl and his sword had already become open to the public.

“”Yes, it is fine even if we don´t take this too seriously. I took the head of a centurion; I don´t need to act recklessly.””

In a way only him would hear, Willian spoke to himself as a way to confirm his thoughts. The answer he got from thinking that much since that time was that he didn´t need to recklessly go after achievements anymore during this war. There was no need to commit to risks like at that time when he fought the centurion. It would be only natural if Karl had already got his ticket to being promoted to a ten man squad captain by now.

“”Even if I take the head of another centurion, there won´t be any promotions.””

In that case, he didn´t need to make any moves. However….

ズクリ (TI note: Couldn´t find the meaning of this anywhere…)

Somewhere in his heart, it started throbbing. Willian himself wasn´t aware of that; it was a part of his heart he couldn´t feel that was throbbing.

“”Am I being impatient? How foolish. I am calm. I am more rational than anyone, and I am able to carry things through with more composure than anyone here. And it is not only that. Right now, doing this is enough!””

In the depths of his heart, he…

“I am the supreme general of the kingdom of Ostoberg, my name is Strakules! Brats of Arcadia, if you want my head, come take it! Gahahahaha.”

The eyes of Willian, Karl and of everyone in the battlefield were focused onto a single place. It was that much of a large battlefield; people wouldn´t give a shit about only a single person. However, that man was clearly different from all the other men.

“…Karl, what is that?”

Willian looked at [that] in confusion.

“Didn´t he just self introduce himself? More importantly, who would have known that the supreme commander Strakules was really here! Uwah, this is the first time I saw

him.”

While Karl was being all carefree, Willian was trembling in fear. The shine of the man in front of his eyes. No, the shine of the man that was supposed to be far away from him was oppressing. It was possible to say that this shine was his aura. Willian, who had intended to not allow anyone to be above him in his life, for the first time had yielded. He ended up yielding.

“”What… happened to me.””

It was a monster that stood in a distant, high and unreachable place. It was probably stronger than Kail, and besides, his power was at a different dimension that Willian had never seen before. All in all, its power was at a different magnitude to the one of a human.

“”Where am I right now?”

From the outer wall of the fort, Willian started to compare himself to the man that was standing at an even higher place. To one side, one was radiant, and to the other side, the other one was buried in the ground. There was too much difference. The difference between nobles and slaves could be seen there.

It was to the point all he could do was to accept it…

“”What I am…””

“Kaaaaaaaaaaaaaaarrrl!”(Willian)

“Hyai!? Wh-what is it, Willian!?”

Willian was restless.

“I will go ahead. However, this is the battlefield. I don´t know what might happen. You must definitely not go away from the squad and move in unison. You guys too, protect Karl-sama. If Karl-sama happens to die, I will kill all of you in the name of Lord Teirah.”

“Eh, but…”

Willian bursted out into a dash. He wasn´t the usual calm Willian. With a grim face, he turned into another person; one that greedily wanted to look up at the skies.

“Willian!”

Karl´s voice wouldn´t reach him. In an extreme velocity, he ran through the battlefield.

“I can´t lose!”

Willian himself didn´t know what he was angry about. He had no idea why he had dashed out, or why he was running now. The only thing he knew was that…

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“Your Highness! This is too reckless. What would we do if your Highness was to be hit by arrows.”

“Umu, sorry, sorry. But look, the livelier ones got baited.”

Strakules and his subordinate were looking at the battlefield from a high place at the outer walls.

“I see. By looking at their equipment, those are the light infantry. In other words… The white brat that had done Haian in should be among them.”

“Indeed. Though not as much as I do, that brat really stands out. Guhaha.”

It was impossible to discern the normal soldiers from one another. It was a war that could only be seen as a bunch of specks of sand squirming around. However, the two could clearly see the dangerous sprout that was in the midst of that.

“Whether you are genuine or false, you will prove it yourself. I will go down here and mess you up.”

“May that be your will, but the heavy infantry has already flanked the enemy from the east gate.”

Ignoring Strakules, who was surprised by what his subordinate said, the subordinate was looking around down at the battlefield.

“They broke in.”

The Ostoberg army suddenly appeared from the side and completely ate up the Arcadian army, who were looking only upwards at the walls. Those numbers were overwhelmingly lower than the Arcadian army, but the advantage in the terrain, battle formation and also in the quality of the soldiers were all inclined towards Ostoberg.

“Guhah. Like always, that detestable guy is too much serviceable. Even though I wanted to go do that too.”

“We should let the soldiers do the surprise attacks. After all, this war is meaningless.”

Strakules´s subordinate narrowed his eyes. It was a gaze that somewhat looked like the one of a tiger. Interrupting his subordinate thoughts, Strakules held the shoulders of his subordinate.

“And that´s why; let´s make this have some meaning. There aren´t that many fellows that stand out like that. That white brat is all unstable, and lacks experience, but on the other way around, doesn´t it mean he still has space to grow? Try him. If he is worth eating, let him live. If he doesn´t, you can remove him.”

The man beside Strakules was well aware that the eyes Strakules had when he spoke that somewhat had an air of certainty. Moreover, Strakules himself told him to go test the white brat.

“As you wish. Please, leave the trifling matters to me.”

“Umu. I will leave it all to you. I will go fight at the war!”

After Strakules took his leave, the man once again glanced at the scenery of the battlefield.

“This is a worthless war for his Highness to have come. Make it at least have any meaning, white brat.”

The heavy infantry forced their way in. The [whiteness] the man was steadily gazing at was obstructing their advance. It was worth watching the manner he was able to make

his way from the place he was before all the way there.

“Hou, it seems that you can do some work.”

The man narrowed his eyes at the gust of splashing blood.

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The chaotic battlefield

“Shh!”(シィイ！)

Without the slightest hesitation, and without doing any blunder, Willian´s sword severed the head of a black armored shinigami.

“Gaaaaaah!”

Putting away all carefulness he had been paying his mind to until now, he simply madly rushed ahead. He cut through all that hindered him.

“Uh, Darah!”(う、ダッラァ！)

He didn´t have the time to be going after the complete victory he had been preparing for until now. He would barely be able to run through all his enemies in high speed. Because of that, he was continuously getting more and more light wounds and was being dyed in the splashed blood of his enemies and in his own blood.

Willian advanced forward using his techniques, which were elegant and silent, ferocious, and also sometimes rough.

“You, don´t pe kidding me! …Wha?”(この、ふざけ「ひゅ」なっ！　……あへ？)

Despite all things, the power of the sword that was made in Rushitania was very useful for cutting heads. The movements Willian had been using before now were all ones he would be able to cut people with just a simple sword, without needing to use the might of his weapon.

But right now, he was using it to its full potential.

“That guy, is strong!”

That certain man that had no doubts about his superiority smashed Willian´s confidence and made his true [himself] come out.

“I am strong, I am excellent, I am smart I am strong I am I am I am….”

His bottom line was gradually fading away. There was a feeling that Willian and [himself] were getting driven apart.

To begin with, he didn´t have any more intentions on risking himself in this war anymore. It was meaningless after all. As long as he didn´t take the head of a general, there wouldn´t be any meaning to all this. The usual Willian would definitely not do something like this. The usual Willian, who would have been carefully taking measures

the more reckless he would need to act was now…

“I am, strong you knowww.”

He broke down. Just with the appearance of the supreme commander Strakules, a man that would act like a machine had been broken down. However…

“You see, I am nee-san´s knight after all. Right, nee-sannnn.”

It was because he had been broken down, and it was because he was now exposed in his true self that he was such a dreadful existence.

“You can´t go flirt with guys more amazing than me. I will eat those kind of peoplee..”

The white beast was dyeing the battlefield in blood.

○

“I see.”

The scene he watched under his eyes. There was a place in the battlefield that was clearly stood out from others. The one leading the charge at that place was a white beast that could be spotted even from the distance.

“I can see how Haian had been eaten. That guy is on a different level.”

Haian was his own subordinate. He was an exceptional centurion. However, this was his limit. Compared to the white haired boy, while he looked like he was used to the times of peace, now that he released [his self], there was an extremely wide disparity. He had disordered movements and unnecessarily stood out, but even deducting points because of that, his total score was something Haian couldn´t compare to.

“His impression to the soldiers isn´t bad, I guess.”

Him being in the lead wasn´t simply that he was madly running at the front. The reason why the white haired man wouldn´t get left on his own was because there were people following his lead. Similarly to the white haired, those people had also lost their sanity. They were completely influenced by the one leading them, and now were a group of insane people that would madly fight until their death.

“Hm, I wonder what is this he had been hiding all this time.”

All the people in this battlefield were affected by hearing Strakules´ [voice]. That was without distinction between allies and enemies. That was the power of a general; the power of Strakules, the sword of the kingdom. Once the soldiers heard his voice, they

would get full of energy, and the weaker ones would lose their strength. However, sometimes there would be someone that would be affected in another way other than those two.

“Whether he is just an insane person or the egg of a warrior, I will have you show it to me.”

Willian, the white haired man. What would the man´s impressions of him be.

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“Cavalry charge from the west! It is proba…”

“Strakules, right.”

A big man slowly stood up from his chair. He was wearing white armor and helmet; it was the appearance of a war hero. In paintings, he would be pictured as the god of war. That was who this man was.(TL note: It doesn´t say where he was sitting… It only says he stood up. Although the word used literally translates to standing up, it might have another meaning -.-)

“General Baldias, we must depart”

The unmoveable Baldias.

It was a man that gave off a strong impression of always being late for doing things, and since the beginning, he had been losing the initiative for having a certain victory. He was characteristic of letting his opponent choose his first move and let his weak point appear, and then, he would lead a heavy attack, making that his [heavy war] method. Because of that style, Baldias owned the title of chief general in the kingdom of Arcadia.

“Black gold. Like always, he is such a carefree man.”

“Hey, an unmovable bastard like you is just some gloomy old man.”

Who would have thought both the generals of both armies would be glaring at each other from their horses as the assault of the castle was happening. Normally, this was something that would never happen. The reason why both generals expected this from each other was because both were close acquaintances.

“Your second in command isn´t there. I believe he was the one commanding the army at Raconia.”

“Umu.”

Baldias answered with only a few words. Even so, there could be seen weight in them.

“…Will Ostoberg throw away Raconia?”

“Who knows? I am merely some guy serving the military. We have the policy of not putting our heads into politics.”

“Because of how competent you are, you should have noticed how they don´t have the intent to win, Strakules!”

Both of their armies were furiously fighting. Both sides combined had less than a hundred cavalry. But even so, the heat of that battle was in a similar proportion to the assault at the fort. Rather, it was even more. It couldn´t be compared in terms of brutality.

“It is fine as long as I can take your head, Baldias!”

Both charged at each other at the same time. The cavalry were being ridden by huge men in fast speeds. Baldias was using a long spear and Strakules was using a big sword. Both swung those weapons normal people wouldn´t be able to even hold.

Both passed by each other in a flash.

“Ku-ooh!?”(く、おっ！？)

It was a roar that even made both armies falter.

“Guhah!”(ぐはぁ)

“Nm!”(ぬん！)

The two rivals continued to exchange blows. The speed and weight of the attacks were to the point of it being terrifying. The cleanliness of their technique were to the point that the difference completely outmatched those of simple soldiers.

The white and black danced. Without one´s notice, it had become a one-on-one duel. This was also the same as always. Baldias and Strakules were fighting each other. It would be very rude to interrupt them now. There was nobody in this battle that lacked those manners. If they lacked those manners, the battle would have quickly become a chaotic war full of death for both armies. Of course, the people that lacked the manners were immediately cut down.

“Why do you act!”

“Good gracious, you just can´t forgive me about that. Many things happened, you see.”

Strong and tenacious. Clever like geniuses. Heavy to its utmost.

“Well, it´s already done. Let´s have fun for now, unmoveable!”

“If you keep playing around, you, who sullies this battlefield, will die!”

With even more strength, both clashed against each other.

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The black haired girl VS the black sheep

At the outer walls, a pool of blood was made at the front of the ladders. It was the accumulated blood of both the armies of Arcadia and Ostoberg. With more life being lost, the profundity of that pool increased. The battlefield was a place that consumed the life of people. No matter how much people deluded themselves with the romance of the war, this reality wouldn´t change. There were many reasons and questions of righteousness connected to it. War was a complicated thing. However, in fact…

“Fuhjurururuuuuuhuh”(ふじゅるるっるうぅううッ)

It was simpler than anything. No matter the intentions of people, there was only one thing that controlled the battlefield.

“Hah, hah, baaah?”(ハァ、ハァ、バァぁァあア)

It was only power. A beast had lost his way into the battlefield. It was a beast that was like the embodiment of power.

The crimson gem splattered in blood that hanged by its chest shone as if it represented the beast´s destiny of being covered in blood.

His body was slim and flexible. He had supple muscles, and its nimble moves hid danger.

“How horrendous. And also…”

The man that was looking at that beast could see a crowd of spirits coiling around it. At

most, they were only illusions, but even so, they also represented the beast´s nature. That was something that could be said to be his aura. It couldn´t represent the situation of his twisted mind any better. It was its own insane world that was disgusting just to look at.

“….strong!”

“Jaahahahahah!”(じゃああアああぁアっ！)

The white beast jumped in front of the man. It had its hands at the ground and moved like a four legged beast. It had thrown away all its reason. It would simply do things because it wanted to. And that was a nuisance.

“Surround him.”

With the words of the man, the beast was separated from the soldiers that were as much insane as the beast. The beast wasn´t bothered about that.

The beast and the man were surrounded and the tall shields stood around them as the walls of the circle. The subordinates of the man acted in order to exterminate the mad people outside the encirclement. With that, it was perfect.

“With that, I guess I will be able to examine you to my heart´s content.”

The man blocked the fang of the beast. It wouldn´t be weird that he would have already died if he was at the level of a centurion. For how he was able to parry the attack of the beast only proved how much power he had.

“Grrrr”(ぐるっるうう)

As soon as the beast noticed it wouldn´t be able to win by fighting directly, it took impulse by kicking one of the shields that were surrounding him and took a [higher] position.

“Nu, coming from the skies!?”

People were weak against attacks that came from above. The more one would fight in a certain way, the more one would get used to fighting in that way. For people that were used to fighting at the ground, this was overwhelming and outside expectations. Therefore, it became a weakness. It was the weak spot of warriors.

“Slow.”

The man easily handled the attack. By that, it could be seen that he didn´t have an average historic of wars. He recognized his weak point and took measures against it. It was possible to react to attacks that had no thoughts put behind them. Because of that, there were no gaps in his defenses.

“Fushyaaa”(ふしゃあアぁア)

However, the beast wasn´t any weak. No, it was because it had thrown away its weakness that it was a beast. It was because it could throw away its humanity and because it could follow its instincts that it was a beast. Humans had humanity. The instincts knew the weakness of men.

And so, it aimed for the legs. From a stance so low that it would be impossible to stay in that while standing on two feet, it attacked the man at his ankles. Of course, for humans, who stood in two feet, this could only be a weakness.

“You are still slow.”

Sticking his sword onto the ground, the man defended the attack. Seeing that his sword was blocked, the beast threw it away without hesitations. Since it was a beast, it still had its claws that could cut through flesh and fangs that could break bones. Closing upon the man, the beast jumped at him and aimed for his neck, but…

“I already said you are slow!”

The man snached the neck of the beast and hit it at its stomach with all his strength using his free hand.

“Ghaaaahgogeeeaahhh”(ごがぁぁあああああぼげぇぇぇえあああ)

The beast staggered as it threw up. Falling down, the white beast writhed in pain on the ground.

“That´s what happens when people fall to the level of beast. You big fool.”

The interest in the eyes of the man was fading away. He was already about to be finished in examining the beast.

“You can find people like that as many as you want on circuses or coliseums. All of them are considerably strong, but in the end, they are nothing but beasts. They will definitely not become true warriors.”

Seeing that the beast didn´t show any signs of listening to his words and kept repeating “It hurts, it hurts”, the man sighed. The one in front of his eyes wasn´t the egg of a warrior. It was simply a beast.

“His Highness will probably become disappointed. Even though I thought I was going to be able to bring some meaning to this farce even if it is only a little.”

All meaning had already been lost. All that remained was the routine of tidying up. He was about to turn his head to his soldiers to order them to start the tidying up, but…

“It´s alright, Al. Nee-san is together with you. Pain, pain, go away. See, it doesn´t hurt anymore, right?”

Hearing that weird tone of voice, the man quickly turned his head to the beast.

“Uuu, it hurtss. I´m scareed.”

“That´s right. That big, strong and [black] sheep… It is very scary, right?”

The man frowned.

“Uuu, it´s scaaryyy.”

The white haired man stood up. The aura from before had completely changed, and while his appearance didn´t change, he had completely regressed to becoming a child. And then, the man saw something he couldn´t believe.

““What, is that? I´ve never seen [something] like that.””

The spectacle that was happening in front of his eyes. The aura that was supposed to represent the white haired young man. In there, the crowd of corpses filled with insanity were squirming around and being formed into a single body in the shape of a skeleton.

This was the usual illusion of death that could be seen in that aura, but in the middle of all those corpses, there was a single person. As if she was protecting the young man, and as if she cared for him, the black haired girl gently held him in her arms.

It was something that existed outside of all reason. The man had never felt something like that from someone else before. In the long war experience of the man, and during his whole life, he had never seen such an unreasonable sight.

“It´s alright. Nee-san is together with you. I will protect you.”(TL note: The kanji being used is憑く, which actually means to haunt and possess instead of the one that would be used for saying “together”.)

“Uuu, thank you, Arlette-neesan.”

And then, the young man that was talking to himself once again became a lump of mystery. By himself, the man would use two different tone of voices and would do this little play, making it look like he was talking to someone. No, perhaps the person himself was really thinking he was talking to another person.

“……”

And then, the body of the young man was engulfed by the crowd of dead bodies. If this was the [usual case], the person would have its ego engulfed and would become completely insane. The man had seen people that ended up becoming like that many times. At the battlefield, at the colosseum, at circuses, at very dangerous places…

“Huhu, isn´t he cute? This child is still not strong. He is still a crybaby; a cowardly and sensitive boy. He won´t sleep if I don´t sing him a lullaby; my cute little treasure.”

The amount of dead bodies increased. The one controlling them was the black haired girl. She embraced the man and protected him like she was his guardian angel that would

stay beside him. That girl gently opened her mouth.

“Steal from the thief. Rob from the robber. Kill the murderer. Forgiveness won´t grant you anything; even if you look up at the sky, god won´t give you anything. That´s why let ´s steal. Let´s rob. Let´s kill. My little treasure, kill this mad world that has stolen me away from you♪”

The content of the lyrics was filled with so much despair, hatred and sorrow that one wouldn´t have imagined that by how gentle the lullaby was being sung.

Blood was gushing out from the dead bodies. Tears of blood flowed from the eyes of the girl. The young man also cried.

The ruby beautifully shined in anger in place of the sorrow, despair and hatred. Even in this inexplicable situation, that everlasting shine from the crimson that represented all the young man was would continue to express those feelings.

“Ufufu, such a beautiful red. It is just like this child…. It makes me envious.”

The mood of the black girl changed. The man was paying attention to that scene, and so, he wasn´t able to expect their next move.

He had lowered his guard after being carried by his surprise, and so, while he was distracted, the white haired man jumped at the walls built of shields that surrounded them with all his strength. Without anyone having been able to stop him, he put his hand into the wall of shields and stole a sword out of it. Nobody at the place was able to hide their surprise at such feat.

“I am still an amateur…. so please take easy on me.”

As if he was dancing, the white haired man cut off heads of two of the people close to him. At that instant, the dead bodies raised a voice of cheer all at the same time. As if they were giving reception to a new comrade, the dead bodies were getting happy at the unhappiness of the death of others. This was the representation of their twisted hearts.

"Because we are two, we are twice as strong. Don´t you think?"

The man narrowed his eyes in discomfort. An aura gushed from the man´s body.

Looking at that, the white man that was being manipulated by the black girl also narrowed his eyes.

"…Hmm, a really big sheep. You are strong, right?"

At the man´s surroundings, there was something that wasn´t mist flooding his surroundings. It was a black sheep that had two horns.

"I am black sheep Kimon. Kimon Von Guntar. Name yourself, monster!"

"Willian Rivius…. This is [our] name. We will engulf everything in the world. We will make it submit to us and take control of the world! We are so thirsty, so hungry that we cannot help!"

[Willain] moved. Swinging the sword he stole, he rushed at the man that named himself Kimon. Inside his body, a red haired youth was singing with a voice full of resentment. It was a chorus of corpses.

In a flash, the sword was about to reach Kimon´s throat…

“Did you think your sword would reach me, woman? My name is Kimon. I am the strongest man of the kingdom of Ostoberg and the right-hand of the supreme general Strakules. Your desire… It is so bland that it won´t even make for a joke!”

The man´s sword; Kimon´s attack had hit [Willian]´s whole body; his body and spirit. [Willian]´s sword broke into two pieces and the aura of dead bodies vanished like mist. All that remained was…

“Ara, as expected, we couldn´t win against him.”

…the black haired girl and the manipulated young man. [Willian] immediately dropped the broken sword and evaded Kimon´s sword. However, they received the force of that diagonal slash and fell down to the ground without having lost their life.

“Then, let´s go with the plan B.”

The place he fell to was where he had dropped his sword before.

“Are you going to face me with that?”

Giving one glance at Willian, Kimon pointed his sword at him. Willian showed a smile, and then…

“If we can´t win, there is no way we would be fighting you, right? We are running away.”

Willian jumped back. Nimbly doing a backflip and making use of its momentum, Willian cut the head of a soldier that was serving as part of the wall. It was a move nobody at this place was expecting. Even Kimon didn´t expect that.

“Such bland taste. It won´t do anything even if we eat it, but well… Thank´s for the treat.”

Spinning around like he was dancing, Willian was cutting heads off. He was cutting life as if he was picking up flowers. His gentle smile and the ruby that was vividly shining made a contrast to the tragedy.

“Tch, scatter! Open up a path!”

Even so, Kimon´s orders weren´t able to accomplish anything in this abnormal situation.

“Fufu, here, come here.”

The place was tightly crowded with people. It would have been impossible to do such inhuman movements. However, Willian was moving around as he liked. A proof for that was the bodies that had their life stolen away accumulating.

“You might be stronger, but because you(plural) are being tied by limits, we will surpass you. Limits like comrades that won´t catch up with you ever again once you surpass them… Limits like regulations, laws, ethics…. It´s really stupid.”

Willian was standing at the edge of the wall. The red of blood and of his ruby colored his gentle smile in a bewitching manner.

“That is your dead end. I will now be cutting you down!”

Pushing away his subordinates, Kimon went towards Willian with a face full of anger.

“This kind of common sense is not good. If you keep up with that, this child will soon reach to your level. This child is cowardly and sensitive… But he is diligent, hard-working, and more than anything, he is starving.”

The instant Willian said that, he inclined his back towards the edge of the wall.

“Wha!?”

Willian was in the middle of the air. Under the wall, there was only the ground, and if he hit it, only death would be awaiting him.

“Let´s meet again. And at that time, this child will definitely eat you, and you will become part of us.”

The illusion of dead bodies all became excited. Kimon could also see the dead bodies of his subordinates in that clump of bodies.

“Wait!”

As Kimon stood still in vain, Willian was pulled by gravity and fell from the wall.

“Tch.”

Kimon went to the edge of the wall and looked at the ground. Under the wall, all he could see was the Arcadia army moving around, and he couldn´t see the surface of the ground. It was unknown if Willian was dead or alive.

If he had gone against Kimon, he would have definitely died. But if he was to fall down from there, it was still possible that he wouldn´t die.

"…I guess I don´t know if he is still alive."

It was a gamble that would put your life on the line. It wasn´t a gamble of fair chances. However, even then, this was the choice with the most chance of survival at that situation. It was the culmination of logic. Without discarding all your emotions, it would be impossible to take on a gamble that risked your life.

"To all troops. This battle is our defeat."

It was an order he had given with regret. Kimon´s actual job was to have the troops properly evacuated from this battle once they were to lose. The battle was nothing but a farce. Just like Baldias had guessed, this siege at Raconia was nothing more than a farce.

Hearing the order of retreat, the soldiers immediately started to move in order to carry it out.

"…"

While looking at the field down the walls by himself, Kimon was thinking about the opponent he had fought moments ago. This opponent was very different from all people he had faced until now, and so, Kimon was unable to examine him. He had no idea what that man had gone through.

"Sir Kimon. We should soon leave here."

Kimon´s subordinate called for him. Kimon nodded without saying anything and turned

his eyes away from outside of the walls.

"…"

He turned away from the edge and went to leave the place. One step, two steps…

[Let´s meet again.]

A feeling of cold assaulted Kimon. He felt that whispering voice next to his ears from [behind him]. Kimon immediately turned his head back, but there wasn´t anyone there.

"…That´s bad. Perhaps, I might have let an outrageous monster escape."

Kimon was certain that [Willian] was alive. He wondered in anxiety whether this would influence him, Strakules and Ostoberg in some way.

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The outcome of the battle

“It seems you were able to successfully pull back.”

“Well, Kimon is really exceptional after all. Kahaha.”

After they had exchanged many liters of sweat and both of their preys started to dwindle, both took distance from each other as if they had planned to do so beforehand. Both Baldias and Strakules could feel that the battle had ended.

“Are you going after us?”

“Won´t. After all, you would scatter around using the speed of your cavalry in the end.”

“Gahahahaha! Thanks to you, I was able to have some fun in this battle!”

“Hmph, in the end, this is nothing more than a play.”

“You aren´t honest, are you? Well, it is that thing… Well, I still don´t know well, but let me tell you one thing.”

“…?”

Strakules showed a smile that had profound meaning to Baldias, who was curious to what he was about to say.

“Times change! An era we know nothing about is coming!”

Strakules spread out his arms and shouted. It was to the point his happiness could be felt even through the helmet. Baldias raised his visor.

“Did you see something in all this farce?”

“Many things. To begin with, it isn´t just this war. Let´s just say that I´ve gone through a lot of things.”

Saying only that, Strakules made his horse turn around by skillfully handling the reins.

“Both of us won´t want to be late for what is about to come, guhahaha.”

“I don´t have any intend on following with such worthless things. If you are going to retreat, then do it already.”

“Gahahahaha. Well then, farewell!”

That back that gallantly left the battlefield was overflowing with ambition to the point it couldn´t be thought of that being the back of a defeated general.

“A new era, is it? How stupid.”

However, Baldias had a presentiment. He felt that something was going to change. In this case, the fact they were able to take Raconia back being the sign of that…

Until now, the territory of Raconia had been drawn as part of Arcadia in the maps for less than ten years. This was a very extended period of rule comparing to how the historic went. This time, Arcadia decided to govern this land for a even more extended period of time. This was the beginning of this war between the kingdoms of Arcadia and Ostoberg.

To which of them the advantage leaned towards, nobody knew yet.

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"…an , Willian, Willian!"

"…Hm."

When Willian opened his eyes, he saw Karl with a crying face in front of his eyes. At his surroundings, there were the people of the ten man squad he was part of. Since there was a ceiling, it meant that he was inside the encampment of the Arcadian army.

"I… What happened to me?"

"It isn´t just what happened to you! You suddenly ran off and went up to the walls. We desperately tried to follow after you, but there were so many people… When you jumped down the walls, I entered in panic and didn´t know what was happening anymore!"

Unusual to him, Karl was showing an angry face. Willian felt a strange feeling of exhaustion when he looked at that face. Letting aside Karl´s scolding shouts for now, Willian needed to put his mind in order about his current situation.

""This time, I lost. This time, only faint memories are remaining. There was a black

sheep that was burning intensely. I can´t remember where those memories came from, but because of the heaviness of that last attack… my hand got burned.””

The numbness in the palm of his hand still didn´t fade away. This was a hint that his memories were true.

“”Beast, it was like a beast. The me reflected in their eyes was just like an horrendous beast.”

Willian remembered the reflection of his appearance at the eyes of the people he killed. He was drooling saliva mixed with blood, his face was twisted into becoming unrecognizable and his eyes were bloodshot. Willian´s appearance was so terrifying to a point there was nothing that could be done about it.

“”After that, I… met with nee-san. We had a conversation like we would always do…. No, after we talked, I became her? As if. Something like that is just stupid.””

However, the numbness that remained in Willian´s hand and the memories that remained in his head about the monologue between his sister and himself, who had returned to his childhood self, were definitely there. It was difficult to believe on that, but when he was facing the enemy, Willian couldn´t control his body at all.

“”I was affected by that thing that was wrapped around that man and lost contorl of myself. Besides that, I picked up a fight with someone much more distant in the world than me. ….Kk, kakah…””

“Khahahahahahahah!”

The people around him were startled.

“Wh-what´s the matter Willian? Are you angry? Did I say too much?”

“Haha, no Karl, you are not at fault. It´s only that I am really not good at all, and that I was only able to notice that after all this time. I thought of myself as someone that was rational; I thought of myself as someone calm. However, after opening the lid… It was all this. I can´t help but laugh at that.”

Willian was burning in the anger he had of himself. He wanted to kick the himself that had been so full of confidence until now. He wasn´t superior at all. He only mistook himself as someone excellent. He thought everything he learned from the books was the truth and only looked at things on the theoretical side. He, who was the embodiment of all that, mistook himself as someone superior than others.

“Willian is already good enough. I am not good at anything after all.”

Willian was thankful of Karl´s consolation. He had received the comfort of Karl, who was at a overwhelmingly lower standing than himself. This was a complete disgrace. However, right now, this was something comfortable. He needed to throw away this feeling of anger, this stupidness, all all those negative feelings.

“Thank you Karl. It really helps me that you say that.”

This was the level of Willian´s driving force. He was quickly expelling those feelings of anger that were directed at himself.

“Sorry everyone. I´ve troubled you.”

Why did he need to lower his head to small fries that weren´t worth of even remembering the name? This was all due to his mistakes. Because he failed, he needed to lower his head. This was the meaning of losing.

“”I won´t lose… ever again.””

Since he wouldn´t allow that, all he could do was to keep winning. He needed to keep winning and seize a position where he would have people lowering their heads to him. He would become superior than anyone, stand higher than anyone…

“”I won´t lose. I will win keep winning.”

Willian made an absolute vow to himself. He swore he would be winning all his battles from now on.

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The world of the talented

The kingdom of Ostoberg. It was a kingdom located to the southeast of Arcadia. They had about the same amount of lands compared to Arcadia and their climate was pretty much the same as well. If one was to say a difference, it would be that the temperature was slightly higher there. Besides that, to the south, they bordered with the superpower, the kingdom of Garias, a military country that was famous for how they kept Ostoberg´s invasions in check. The kingdom of Ostoberg was a country that was considered one of the seven kingdoms.

"Gahaha, congratulations, your Majesty!"

At the major power of the kingdom of Ostoberg, a change was happening. At the present moment, the hero of Ostoberg, the [Black Gold] Strakules, was lowering his head to a certain person…

"No, it´s nothing to be proud of. It was Strakules that did all the hard work. I believe it is very unforgivable that I asked a hero like you to lose a battle not many days after I had asked you to meddle with Garias."

It was a skinny youth of fifteen years old. His lustrous hair made it feel like "a good person" aura flowed from his eyes and his whole body. In addition, this aura would dissolve any kind of suspicion against him. Everyone would come to like the youth and nobody would be guarded around him. If one was to describe him in a few words, it would be that he was a very likeable person.

The youth lowered his head to Strakules and the place became noisy.

"…You majesty, if a king thoughtlessly lowers his head, it sullies his reputation."

Hearing Strakule´s advice, the youth showed a surprised expression.

“However, gramps…”

“Cough*!”

“Ho-however, Strakules. I have responsibility in having sent you to do unfavorable tasks. It is impossible for me to ignore that and keep holding my head high.”

The youth showed a smile. With just that, the place became calm again. Strakules sighed and showed a smile to the youth. In response to that, the youth made an even broader smile. Simply by that, despite all the people at the place being in the presence of their king, there could be felt a trace of a cozy feeling in the mood.

“Because the previous king has died and the domestic situation of the kingdom is unstable, it is now the time we need to be careful the most.”

“Uh, sorry Kimon, for not being so reliable.”

“…If your Majesty makes such a face, I will be the one looking like the villain.”

Strakules second in command, Kimon, who had been in his guard all this time, had immediately been charmed by the youth´s demeanor.

“Well, but since we saw through the instability, we´ve already cut out the most important factor for the instability. That place we were at disadvantage; all they value is honor.”

They had thrown away Raconia on purpose. This was something everyone present at the place had agreed on.

Originally, they didn´t have any reasons to attack, but the last command of the previous king was that they were to take back Raconia at all costs, which resulted in that big war. Even if they had taken Raconia, Ostoberg, which now had just changed kings, wouldn´t have the spare time to be able to hold onto that. Therefore, they had thrown it away. So their plans would not be seen through, and so their instability would not be clearly shown, they meticulously took measures…

“The previous king was a good man. He properly chose his successor and took precautions about the question of the succession line so that things wouldn´t get problematic. The last invasion at Raconia was reckless, but this too was for the sake of his Majesty.”

“I know that, Strakules. Father has given me the chance of prestige to the me who is still weak by having me have the chance to capture Raconia. Why would I have any reason to resent my father´s last act of love.”

Kimon listened to the conversation while having dreary thoughts in his mind.

The previous king wasn´t a fool, but he definitely wasn´t a wise person. The invasion of Raconia he ordered at his last moments was all for him to be able to leave his name in the history. He didn´t have any love for his son; only after all the efforts from Strakules and Kimon was that the youth was able to be elevated to the position of the successor of the crown. If Strakules had remained neutral, it wouldn´t be possible for the youth to be sitting at the throne now, and instead, much more now, he would have been caught at the dire affair the dispute for the throne was.

“Besides, even if father is not here anymore, all of you are here for me. You all are like my own father. I will be counting on you, everyone. Let´s all work together and have Ostoberg prosper!”

It was a voice that had no ambition in it. However, everyone in the place became filled with energy. This too was because of the virtue the youth held. Although this was the only weapon the youth had, it was the most potent of all.

“By the way, I have some sweets. Let´s eat them together.”

He was a swindler.(TL note: I am not sure if this is being said in the literal meaning. It might mean in the way that the youth swindled the people by “honestly being nice to them”, but it still being swindling because all those people yielded to him just because he was nice to them. Later on, in the text, it doesn´t say anywhere the youth is really deceiving the people. Rather, it feels more like the youth is really like that.)

Strakules had the belief of not participating in the politics. However, that power was the reason why he had supported the youth to become the king to the point he would go against that belief.

At the present situation of his reign, there already weren´t any more political enemies. No, while there had been, all of them were drawn to the king´s side. This wasn´t something done by deceiving; all was simply him gathering his enemies and meeting them with the intent of naturally becoming friends, which ended up as all of them coming to his side. It was a power that didn´t have any selfishness, and moreover, it was the strongest and it was an unparalleled power.

He didn´t have any enemies. Therefore, he was invincible.

He was the eighth generation in the reign Ostoberg, Elunst Dar Ostoberg. He was the wise rule of their next generation that the hero, Strakules, had fallen in love with in the first sight. There was nobody that could oppose that jaded smile.

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“By the way, Kimon. About that brat… Did you kill him or let him live?”

After having finished his report to Elunst, Strakules was now walking at a corridor at the royal palace together with Kimon. In respect to Strakules, Kimon was walking slightly behind him.

“He was able to stay alive by his own efforts.”

In a very simple way, Kimon simply stated the outcome of the test. Strakules became slightly surprised after hearing that.

“He had ran away from your hands? From the [Black Sheep]´s hands? Gahahahaha!”

As if he had become satisfied with the report, Strakules was showing a smile and started to imagine about the next battles that were to come…

“…I regretted having let him escape.”

Kimon was in a mood different from his usual. Compared to how he would usually be, he was lacking confidence.

“Perhaps, one day, he might become a poison to his Majesty and your Excellency. I am having the feeling it will. Each day I think about it, I feel as if I am becoming more certain about it.”

To Kimon, who would usually answer things in a simple way, those were soft words that didn´t come out of his mouth very often.

“I can have enough of it; I can´t! To think I would be able to taste new things even after becoming of this age! That´s why I can´t stop going to war! Guhaha, I can´t have enough of it!”

Kimon´s worries were wiped away in an instant. That unripe young man wasn´t someone that would be able to do as he pleased against the monster in front of his eyes; this monster that had been born just for the sake of war. At least, he wouldn´t be able to catch up in time while Strakules is still in good health. After becoming confident of that, Kimon was now certain.

“The black brat from Garius and the white brat from Arcadia, and then, his Majesty. Also, with those knights from the prospering kingdom of Arkland, even if the seven kingdoms are still going strong, I can´t read what is going to happen in the future at all. It is because of that that it is so great. It is really great!”

The existence of that man was too heavy. Would even this world in chaos be capable of shaking that man..?

“Will they be eaten by me, or will they eat me… Guhah, now it became interesting!”

Much more now that he grew old, the hero became even more domineering.

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“Hey, Volf. Where are we going next?”

At the north was Ostoberg, and at the south was the central sea, which was the foundation of all commerce. To the east was a mountain range, and at the west, there was a conglomerate of small countries, which was the greatest nation of the world in this generation, Garius. (TL note: Would this be considered an empire? It was never stated in the story before-.- My guess is that it something similar to a commonwealth-ish kingdom)

Those people were a group that were now near the proximities of the borders of the western side. Their encampment was built to make space for a hundred people. The night shone with the red of the bonfires. (TL note: The word used to refer to the red color is ->茜<- which means “madder”, which apparently is some kind of plant. I´ve never heard of it before .-.)

“Ah… For now, how about buying a beautiful nee-chan with the money we got from the war and going to paradise at some island at the central sea in the south.”

The one named Volf was a person that one couldn´t be distinguished between a man or a woman. His head was hit.

“We had to come all our way to Garius to pay for all our debt because you did that the last time! B-besides, you took the money of the whole company all to yourself for that!”

Volf, who had his head beaten, looked at another direction from the eyes of the woman while saying “ouch ouch”.

“…It´s just because they are women that those slaves keep escaping.”

“…The reason my charm doesn´t reach them is because they don´t have any sense of beauty, yes.”

“You are always too greedy. Besides, you are too soft on women. If I was around at that time, I would have killed that slave woman.”

“Like I said before, I did it in the spur of the moment.”(TL note: ->だーから、一人でやったんだっちゅーに<- I´m not sure about this line. Even the person helping me wasn´t sure about it, so I can´t say this is really right T.T At least, it has a good chance of being it because it makes sense 0.0)

“Thaaat´s why I said you are too soft on women!”

The two quarreling was the usual sight. The people at their surroundings kept doing their business, treating that as something normal. Actually, there were pretty much nobody that was on guard duty. All of them were each relaxedly taking their time as they wished.

“Fine then. I can forgive that you are soft on women and that you are too negligent. … But there is no way I can for having been about to die.”

With the tone of that voice suddenly being lowered, the girly man became dejected. Volf´s expression became cloudy.

“…Sorry. To be fair, I was being too pretentious. I didn´t know a monster of that power existed in this world.”

What Volf was talking about was something that happened one month ago at a skirmish between Garius and Ostoberg. They didn´t know why that skirmish was happening at that time, but Volf and her company decided to participate at that war that suddenly happened as mercenaries. The result of that was that they raised many achievements. However, at only one occasion, they suffered a very rough defeat.

“[Black Gold] Strakules. That guy is a monster. He was stronger than anyone I´ve ever met. He was good at commanding, and so was his personal strength. I couldn´t compete with him at all. Besides that, he actually spared my life!”

At that moment, everyone´s eyes who had been looking somewhere else before all gathered at that place.

“That genius, strong, cool and handsome man had spared me!”

If it was the usual, Volf would have done some kind of tsukkomi somewhere at that declaration, but because his angry expression and also because of the black shadow that was gushing out of Volf for those that could see it, the people around were feeling pressured. (TL note: In the japanese comedy, the tsukkomi happens a lot. Tsukkomi is when a person does or says something stupid, and the other guy says something about it, doing a tsukkomi. Think of it as “adding a joke”)

“I agree with you about the genius and strong part, but about him being cool and handsome…. Besides, this ruins all your point.”

Among all the people, there was only one that was calm.

“Shut up Nikka. Either way, that was really humiliating. Even though it is already surprising that there were people more outstanding than me, even that general´s sheep bastard is stronger. I am depressed. Really depressed.”

The macho woman named Nikka violently scratched her head.

“Yooou knooow, you are going against the army of a country and his general. Besides, it is one of the seven kingdoms. It would be stranger if you were to win. How many times do I need to tell you?”

Volf became teary and started to sniff because of Nikka´s scolding words.

“It´s because… I promised I would definitely not lose.”

“It was Lilya, right? I know about that. But even so, you should know it is the end once you are dead, right? You need to live in order to have a chance to get revenge. If you die,

I will be alone. If that happens, it will be reeeeally lonely.”

There was a small locket hanging by Volf´s chest. In the whole world, probably only the two of them remembered about the person drawn in the picture inside the locket. To the two, that person was an existence there was no replacement to.

“I know, I know. I won´t lose. And I also won´t die. I might be reckless, but I won´t overdo. It should be fine like that, right, Nikka?”

Volf silently opened the locket and looked at the picture of the smiling girl that was inside it. Those were the vestiges of the memories about the little country distant at the north Volf used to live at before it had been destroyed. They weren´t able to do anything. They weren´t able to save anyone, nor able to allow the dead to rest in peace. Just like that, all they could do was to remain alive. All they could do was to blame their weak selves. (TL note: In the raw, the “nor able to allow the dead rest in peace” is ->楽しませてあげる<-. By reading what I wrote, some might think that they weren´t able to bury the corpses or something. I believe that it actually means that they weren´t able to take revenge on the dead, and so, not being able to have them rest in peace knowing the people that killed them are dead.)

“…Ou. Then, let´s have it decided in the next battle. We aren´t weak anymore. However, we aren´t strong enough to be letting our guards down. In order to become strong… we need to experience more of the world! We are ten years early from the paradise at the south countries.”

Nikka sat at the big bonfire located in the middle of the encampment which many people were gathered nearby.

“Thank you for the manzai.”(TL note: Manzai = type of japanese comedy.)

“What!?”

Whistlings and cheers like “How hot!” and “It´s fine even if you are a macho woman. Please, let me do it with you!” came from the surroundings. Nikka looked at the man that called her a macho man and threw a knife she slipped from her wrist. The man fell down in surprise.(TL: whistle´s onomatopoeias all suck!)

“I am not your wife, and I am also not a macho woman! I am a fully-fledged girl, you stupid bastard!”

Now would be the time for people to fall silent. For those that started to laugh at such time lacked one or two screws in their head. After giving a snort, Nikka returned to the place she was sitting.

“Ten years, huh. Will we be able to get to that level after ten years? At the level of that monster.”

The man sitting next to Nikka said while sighing.

“We will catch up. It´s just that Volf is that much of a genius, strong and also hardworking. There is nobody that battles on worse conditions than him. That´s why all we need to do is to surpass him. Once we surpass him, there will be nobody that will be able to get to our level. Volf is an awesome guy after all, yes.”

Nikka´s cheeks were slightly reddened. Whether it was because of the bonfire, or because or something else…

“Well, it is because Volf is [fast]. All we are doing is desperately running after him so that we are not left behind. If. While we are desperately running after him, we might leave everyone else behind. And then… the [Noir guard] will become the strongest.” (TL note: I´m not sure if the guard part is correct. The name in katakana is ノワール・ガルー, which is above the japanese one in little letters ->黒の傭兵団<-. Since there is this 傭兵団, I guess it should be guard? Katakana engrish is always like that anyways -.-)

Noir Guard. This was the name of the mercenary group everyone here was part of. The leader was Volf. The second-in-commands were Nikka, and also the mild man she was talking to right now.

“Wolfs will band together after all. There isn´t any living thing that can win against wolves that stay together.”

The black wolves were silently sharpening their fangs and claws. They were still a small group, but for the sake of one day gourge their fangs onto the word, they would go to wars and diligently train themselves.

“Hey, so it is really no good even if it only one?”

“It´s obvious it is no good! You bastard, I will have you do a rocket dogeza a hundred times!”

Under the starry sky, the jet black wolves were lively moving around.

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Distant to the east, across the sea, there was a big island. On this continent that was called Garnia, there were many small countries. Those would get destroyed, and many others would be founded, and then those would be destroyed; and so on the cycle would continue. This displayed well the aspect of this generation of warring states that was whirling in chaos.

Among all those small countries, there was a country that shined like brilliant stars. Its name was Arkland.

“Hime-sama, the wind of the night is poison to the health.”

“Yes, I will be here just for a short while.”

Since its founding, it has been five years, and not even three years has passed since its name changed to Arkland. However, in only those two years, its name was made know throughout Garnia, and after those three years after the change of the crown, let alone Garnia, it had its name thundered through even the seven kingdoms, which were across the sea.

“At the other side of that mountain, across the sea, there are wars bigger than those at Garnia. Doesn´t it make you excited, Sir Beilin? In my case… I am so excited, but so excited I can´t bear.”

The man called Beilin could see the big fire blazing inside the girl that hadn´t even come to age.

“I love war. I also love the blood, the iron; all this is dear to me. I wonder if I am mad. Is this fire that burns my body the evidence of this curse, or not?”

The beautiful red haired girl tenderly stroked the sword that was at her waist.

“Mad is fine. Hime-sama may stay as the warring maiden Apolonia of Arkland. All of us Arknights accept everything hime-sama will face against, and will cut all enemies.”

Seeming like she was satisfied of his answer, although the girl named Apolonia was looking at the night sky full of stars, at the great lands at the other side of the mountains, she was showing a gentle smile.

“Leave some for me to kill.”

“As you will.”

The girl that didn´t have even seventeen years, Apolonia of Arkland. This girl was Arkland´s main factor for their rapid progress, and was without doubt, the person ruling Arkland.

“Besides, I am not a princess anymore. You should stop calling me princess, Sir Beilin.”

“Ha, I am very sorry, your Majesty, queen Apolonia.”

“…This sounds creepy.”

“Ha.”(はっ)

Three years ago, at the young age of fourteen, Apolonia succeeded the throne. The king abdicated the throne by his own will and gave the crown to Apolonia. For the sake of Arkland´s prosperity, the strongest person must be the one to become the king. Therefore, Apolonia became the king. She became stronger than anyone and became more capable of being the king than anyone. Because of that…

“From times to times, you may call me princess. Now then, tomorrow will also be war. Today we should rest, and tomorrow we are to trample down the enemy!”

“As you will!”

The continent of Garnia was being burn by a fire called Arkland. At the moment, this fire was only gathered at Garnia. However, if one day it comes that it spreads outside of it, it wasn´t known whether even the seven kingdoms would be able to stop it. A fire that would burn to this extent was what the kingdom of Arkland, and its ruler, Apolonia, were waiting.

“Ah, where is the battlefield that will make my heart race.”

The fire called Apolonia was becoming more intense and was burning the continent.

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Unexpected encounter

Willian was walking at the capital of Arcadia, Arkas, by himself. He actually didn´t have any specific intentions to be doing that. He was simply wandering around to get some fresh air. To Willian, who didn´t like pointless things, this kind of period of idleness was very rare to him. He had too many things he had to think about that his head completely stopped working for the time. It was because of that that Willian was now doing this pointless action.

“”Kail is at his job at the colosseum and Havella is also busy because of the work at her guild. Well, it´s fine… At any point, earlier then at that time….””

“It seems what you are talking about is really serious, but isn´t things of that sort the type that you should ask other people to teach you? People that can do things will be able to them, and people that can´t won´t for the eternity. Whether it is for talent, or for sense, and other things.”

“…You bastard, are you saying that I have no talent?”

“I´m not saying that. Rather, you have too much of it, or so I think. Well, but you should have been able to immediately get to use it as long as you just had the basic perception of it. Though, saying “get to use it” is a faulty expression, I guess.”

“I don´t get what you are saying. Explain it in a way I can understand.”

“This is impossible. I can´t just let you know everything about me. The opposite would be the same too.”

“…Miser.”

“Sorry. Well, if I was to give you one advice… It would be for you to accept yourself, I guess. ….No, actually, forget it. This would be too harsh on you.”

“I don´t get what you are saying.”

Willian remembered about his conversation with Kail the previous day. In the end, he wasn´t able to understand anything, but a lingering discomfort remained inside Willian.

“Aa-ah, is it impossible for me to get stronger in an easier way?”

To Willian, in a certain meaning, this was his first bottleneck. There were many deep bottlenecks he had to go through, but after pondering about it, and after putting effort, he would be able to break through it for the most of it. If he needed to learn about it, he would get a place he would be able to study about it, and if he didn´t have enough muscles, he could simply eat things that were very nutritious and have an adequate amount of exercise. He would obtain knowledge and put it into practice. Before, just this sufficed.

“I wonder what I am supposed to do from now on.”

He also couldn´t keep being in the care of the Teirah family forever. Even if it was impossible for him to have a whole house for himself, it was obviously still possible for him to think about renting a place. Since he was a foreigner, him living at the slums would be suitable, and besides, the rent there would also be cheap.

“”No, I would stand out even if I was to cause the smallest trouble, so I might need to go live in an inn… But is it too expensive to be possible in the end? There are some small shitty rooms that are really cheap… but as expected, since I´m not a slave, I would be looking bad in the eyes of society….”

Even for such a simple thing like that, Willian couldn´t think of an answer even after thinking about it.

“”What is it about reputation, this stupid thing. I am really not thinking well right now. If I don´t go back to normal soon, I don´t know what kind of mistake I might end up making.”

Willian scratched his head. Being able to quickly think about things no matter the circumstance was one of his strong points. At his current situation, this strong point was as good as dead. Even if he was to think about the things he needs to do now, no matter how he tries, those thoughts would lead to [that thing]. That mysterious power spike, and also, the terrifying himself that was reflected on those eyes.

“”Shit, forget about it for now! There are many things I need to think about right now!””

But even so, those thoughts kept clinging onto his head and wouldn´t go away.

Willian was in agony.

“That´s troubling, ojou-san. For you to be putting all the blame onto the merchandize I sell… If you want me to sell it cheap for you, I wish you would say it directly to me, you see.”

“No, that, uhm….”

“If my reputation declines, how are you supposed to take responsibility?”

Willian looked ahead. What came to his sight was a crowd of people. Right in the center of the crowd, there was a stall that was selling cloth. The shopkeeper was probably

having a quarrel with his client. If it was the usual Willian, he obviously wouldn´t poke his nose onto it. However…

"What´s the problem here?"

Right now, Willian was stressed.

"Yes, it is this client here. She started to complain about my merchandize. She was saying this silk wasn´t made in Nehderks. If this beautiful silk isn´t from Nehderks, then where is it supposed to have come from? Isn´t this unreasonable, onii-san?"

Willian approached the shopkeeper of the stall. He glanced at the customer that had complained about the cloth, but because her head was hanging down, there was no way for him to see her face. Willian also didn´t have any interest in seeing it.

In the end… he only came to vent his stress after all.

"I see, it is a beautiful silk. Can I touch it for a bit?"

The shopkeeper hesitated for a moment. At that instant, Willian was able to know who was the one at fault.

"What, it´s not like I am suspecting you. I have no idea how to identify the quality of cloth. I simply want to have a touch at this beautiful and refined cloth."

"Ah, yes, of course, be my guest."

After that, all he needed to do was to bring him down.

“I see, this is a good silk. By the way, owner, this… Do you know what kind of weave is this? No, no, it´s just that I want to have a reference.”

At that instant, the complexion of the shopkeeper´s face changed. The client that had issued that complaint from before also showed a reaction of surprise.

“Something like that dooesn´t matteeer! It has nothing to do with you. Take your hands off it already and just go somewhere else!”

Willian showed a smile. At first glance, Willian looked like an agreeable young man, but…

“The silk of Nehderks is made in satin. This is the same silk, but it is made in plain weave. I don´t have the intention to say which one is of better quality by that, but I would have to say that you promoting this is Nehderk´s silk is just lies.”

Once all the pretence was peeled off, Willian became filled with wicked feelings. His smile was of the devil himself.

The shopkeeper´s face became palid.

“Yo-you said you didn´t know how to identify the quality of cloth…”

“Yes, I don´t know. I have no idea what kind of cloth is of good or bad quality. I simply have some knowledge about it. I know that the silk from Nehderks is made in satin and that the one made at the northwestern side of Arkas is made in plain weave. In terms of selling price… even if both are silk, the price is different by twice the amount, and it should be clear which of them is the higher priced, right?”

The shopkeeper couldn´t even gasp. The crowd of people around the stall were all at once giving angry glares at the shopkeeper. Now that it became like that, he wouldn´t be able to sell anything at this place.

“Well, the plain weave is very firm, so I think that it by itself is a good product. To unknowledgeable eyes though.”

Saying that, he turned away from the stall and walked his way out of the place. He glanced at the shopkeeper, who fell on his knees, and let his mind be carried by the dark feelings of having his appetite satiated.

“”Ah, I feel refreshed now.””

His thoughts were more or less flowing better than before. Defeating others, kicking them down their place and eating a part of their life. After knowing of the feeling of victory once again, Willian got in a bit of a good mood.

“”But despite being the kind of middle-lower class that would be coming at a open-air market like this, that girl was really able to see through the quality.””

Satin and plain weave had many differences, but there was no mistake both were silk. If a first class citizen, who would often deal with shops specialized on that, had gone to this stall, the shopkeeper would have definitely had problems. However, for second and third class citizens, and others that would be coming at such market, it would be unexpected that there could be someone who would be capable of knowing the differences between different weaves.

“”To begin with, she was the one at fault to be issuing the complaint at a place like this. There is no way there would be something of good quality here.””

While it was possible for there to be an imitation product here just for the attention of

customers, there was no way there would be a product of good quality at a stall like this. For her to come all her way to point this out only proved she didn´t understand that. She probably underestimated the shopkeeper.

"…Now then, since my mind is better now, let´s go fish out for something to buy here."

Willian, the slight feeling of relief from before increased.

"…-ello."

""For now, let´s find a room to rent. After I am done with what I need to do, I will go.""

"Uh, hello…"

Willian´s sleeve was twitching.

"Hm?"

Willian´s sight were first at his moving sleeve, and then, it was at the thin fingers that were holding it. Then, it reached to the gorgeous arm, and after that, it reached to the person standing next to him. At that instant….

"What!?"

Willian´s face became stiff.

“Ah, thank you for having helped me before.”

The one saying that with a timid and small voice was Lutogarde Von Teirah. She was Louran Von Teirah´s daughter and the younger sister of Karl Von Teirah, who was currently working at the military together with Willian.

“N-no. I just said what was the truth, yes.”

Willian´s cheeks were twitching and he was making a false and crude smile. Because of how much of a surprise attack it was, he wasn´t able to control his expression.(TL note: The way its written in the japanese one is ->先ほどまでとは別の意味で自身の制御ができないでいた<-, which literally translates to: he wasn´t being able to control himself in another meaning at that moment before. I´m not sure what “in another meaning” would be, but it probably is simply saying he wasn´t able to control himself either way.)

““I-I was caught in an awkward moment. No, rather than that, isn´t her the one that made the complaint?””

Willian looked at Lutogarde in a way that wouldn´t be disrespectful. After having another glance at Ludogarde, he was startled by the lack of aura that she had. It was to the point one would lose sight of her once she got into a crowd of people. While she was a beautiful girl, it couldn´t be felt any kind of presence from her as a person.

““What are the chances of me passing by an acquaintance that is a noble in the big capital of Arkas, and moreover, at a run-down market like this!? Shit!””

He felt like swearing in his mind.

“Um, I´ve heard before you were going to fish out for something to buy, but…”

While she had so suddenly appeared, she didn´t hold out with her questions.

“Ye-yes. There is no way I can forever be in the care of the Teirah family, and since I am receiving wages for being a regular soldier in the military just like Karl-sama, I thought that I should soon find a place to live.”

As Lutogarde was listening to Willian´s words, her face was becoming cloudy in an obvious manner. Seeing that face, Willian became anxious in his mind about whether he had said something bad carelessly.

“There is no way… anybody in the house thinks of you as a bother… probably.”

By the end of the sentence, her voice almost couldn´t be heard. Because of how much small her voice was, it took all his effort for him to be able to catch what she was saying.

“Be-besides, I-I think you should save your money until you have a good amount of money to live without problems. If you can save enough money, you can use it to buy a property and other things… b-but right now, I think you don´t need to be in hurry… Yes.”

“No, but….”

“…”

Ludogarde continued to hold Willian´s sleeve without saying anything. Willian couldn´t understand what she wanted from him. To begin with, he didn´t know the reasons behind her actions.

“B-by the way, what would Lutogarde-sama be doing in such a place like this?”

Thinking he should break out from his current weird situation, he brought up a subject which he actually didn´t have much interest in particular. Lutogarde sluggishly raised her face.

"…Shopping. Uhm, because my family manages a company that works with clothing, and I also do a bit of sewing and designing myself, and because I was entrusted with the clothes for the party by my friends, I… Uhh…. I went shopping. I still didn´t buy the cloth I need though…"

Because of how Lutogarde came to buy cloth, she was probably planning on making the clothes from the scratch. Choosing clothes and making clothes obviously were completely different things. It was only a guess, but her friends probably requested her to choose the clothes. However, Lutogarde decided that it was the latter, and so, she came all her way here to do shopping despite being a noble.

""Sh-she is too stupid.""(TL note: So mean T.T maybe she just wanted to make the clothes herself)

Willian felt like holding his head. Lutogarde was other-worldly and completely different from the standards of how Willian imagined a ojou-sama from a noble family would be like. It was this type of person that Willian had the most trouble with. This was because he couldn´t predict or make calculations of her actions…

""Besides, she won´t release the hem. I don´t understand what´s up with her.""

If this was to continue like this, the day would soon be over. He needed to think of some way to make Lutogarde move; think of a way to have those fingers release his sleeve. The answer he came up with was…

"If you don´t mind, could I accompany you in your shopping?"

It was to give in to her. For now, he needed to give up on all his plans for today and go along with her. Willian believed there would have been a chance for him to get away. However, there wasn´t. Thus, he gave in.

“I don´t.. mind. I am really… thankful.”

Ludogarde was showing a happy smile. It was lovable how she was still firmly holding onto the sleeve.

“Then, let´s go. By the way… isn´t it difficult to walk like this?”

Willian intended to implicitly tell her to release his sleeve by saying that, but…

“Is that, so?”

It seems that he couldn´t get the message across at all.

The weird shopping of the young man, who was leading the way, and the girl behind him who held his sleeve began.

[][]

The mask and Lutogarde

There were many varied things Lutogarde bought during their shopping. Seeming that Lutogarde intended to make everything herself except for what was made of gold, she bought many varieties of cloth and also bought things like jewels that could become used as pins and hair ornaments. The baggage increased, and when the amount became so much a noble girl couldn´t carry, Willian gave up on running away and delved himself into carrying all of it.

“That´s quite the amount. Will Lutogarde-sama participate in the party too?”

Willian was carrying the great amount of baggage by himself. Lutogarde had many times suggested she should carry half of it, but as to be expected, Willian firmly refused. He had to keep the appearances to the eyes of society, and he also had pride as a man.

“No, they invited me, but I refused. I am not good at showing my face at at parties… When I am at them, I often feel like leaving early.”

With that being the case, the amount of things she bought was weird. Seeming that she had noticed Willian acting puzzled, Lutogarde added .

“I am intending on making many sets of clothes, not only one.”

Lutogarde readily declared that, but because of how much hard it felt that this would be to do, Willian could only show a wry smile. He didn´t know how much important her friends were to her, but this was just putting too much time and effort. If she was actually doing all this without compensation, then she could only be considered a complete idiot.

“Sh-should we go have a look there?”

The shop that was ahead of Lutogarde, who was walking to its direction in a steady pace, was a mask shop.

“”That´s weird. Or is it that the party is a masquerade?””

There were many masks hanging at the stall. The open parts for the mouth and eyes were like an abbys looking back at him. To Willian, masks were something unrelated to his life until now. He never wore one, nor has ever thought of wearing one.

“Masks are carved in wood, but there are many kinds of materials like gold or porcelain that can be used for making it. While it is easy to make one of wood, it is very difficult to make one from the scratch with other materials. Because of that, I want to buy one first before I make the masks.”

What Willian had been wondering about since moments ago was about how even though Lutogarde would usually be very silent and talk in a small voice, she could become a bit talkative when talking about things related to clothing. It seemed that she really liked that kind of thing.

“Masks, right…”

While Lutogarde was focused on evaluating the masks, Willian was looking at them since he had nothing better to do. Just like Lutogarde had stated before, Willian was able to spot masks made of wood, porcelain and other various materials. All of the masks gave off some kind of weird feeling.

“”Something to hide your own form. Your expression can´t be read, and so, you can´t get the other party´s suspicion because of that. If I had to say, this is something useful.”

However, to wear a mask is the same as saying that you had something to hide.

""This is something unnecessary to me. I don´t need to go all my way to make reasons for people to be suspicious about me.""

Deciding his own conclusions were right, Willian took his eyes away from the masks.

The weather was cloudy and very gloomy. The people at their surroundings were nervous, wondering if it was going to rain. It could be seen that the stalls, which didn´t have roofs, were all quickly closing.

A raindrop dripped at Willian´s cheek. It seems that it was going to rain.

"While masks are something used to hide yourself, it can also be used to see your inner side."

Willian looked to Lutogarde, who had started to talk. Willian couldn´t see Lutogarde´s expression, who was with her back turned to him.

""A mask is a thin line that interposes between you and the outside. A thin boundary. Because of that, you can become aware of yourself, obtaining an outside perspective of that. I believe masks are something for you to become aware of you own existence."

The image that was wildly going through Willian´s mind was the figure of himself changed to an ugly form.

The rain got stronger.

“Even for me, it is not like I can understand myself. I don´t understand myself, and you surely don´t understand yourself. I believe it is appropriate if those illusions can become of help.”

Lutogarde turned her head to Willian. It was a beautiful smile she had been hiding all this time. Willian gulped. He saw a smile he had never seem from Lutogarde, whose mind he had believed to have already understood…

“Take this. I believe it will definitely suit you.”

The [thing] that Lutogarde gave him was a white mask. That, which covered the expression of the eyes, had a very lonely shape. At one glance, the feeling it gave off was similar to the helm of a knight, but it was shaped in a strange whiteness that would more or less gave the impression of a skull. The red line that was drawn on the mask as decoration resembled the fires of war and the vast amount of flesh and blood.

“This, to me?”

“Yes, I am giving it to you. It is my thanks for having accompanied me in my shopping today.”

To simple people, they would think of a knight by looking at that mask. [That], which had both beauty and strength, was something fitting for a knight.

However, what Willian imagined after looking at the mask was something completely different. The king of death, the king that controlled the deceased souls. It was as if that was the reflection of [himself]. He was feeling chills in his body. To think there would be something that would suit himself this perfectly.

The rain worsened. Most of the stalls were hurriedly closing, and the shop that was right in front of his eyes had already vanished. The only ones that were standing at the place were only two people soaked wet.

Before one´s notice, Willian put on the mask he had received. The ruby by his chest that was supposed to have been hidden inside his clothes was trembling. Both were things he received from Lutogarde. Also, both were things that matched Willian well. Whether it was on the outside, or on the inside…

Unfeeling thoughts came over to him. After being isolated from the outside word by that boundary, he was able to perceive himself in a more objective manner. He was able to feel the coldness of the rain much more acutely than usual. He could feel the rain touching his skin, the smell of the rainy weather, the sound of the raindrops hitting the ground, the taste of the droplets of the rain wafting in the air…

…and with his sight, he could see the girl soaked by the rain that stood in front of his eyes.

“Be careful of father.”

Lutogarde spoke to Willian, who had put his mask on.

“Father is a person that can do anything if it is for the sake of the household. The Teirah family has accumulated a great amount of fortune at my father´s generation. As a count, he had a fortune that nobody among the viscounts could compare. However, Louran Von Teirah still has one thing he lacks. No matter how much money father has, in the end, he is considered just some rich upstart. What father really desires is status. He said this is what it is truly necessary in order to be recognized in this country.”

Willian´s impression of Lutogarde completely changed. Before, he saw her simply as a weird girl and as a stupid person that was shy around strangers and that Willian couldn´t see through her actions. All this had been completely destroyed.

“To father, all it matters is if a person can be used or if not. Me and Ainhart-anisama were considered the type that can be used, and Karl-anisama was considered the latter. In the surface, we are loved, but except for Ainhart-anisama, father has never had expectations from us, neither has ever loved any of us. Ainhart-anisama knew this, so he choose the path of a scholar in order to put resistance. Father easily consented to that. …The reason he did so was because he had completely lost his interest about ani-sama. I think he will soon lose his interest on me too. Because I lack grace as the daughter of a noble… Because it will be impossible for me to be married into a household of high status.”

The content of her story was really miserable to her, but there weren´t any dark feelings in her expression at all. It felt as if it was overflowing with happiness. Willian had the feeling she was.

“But after learning about you, father changed the evaluation of Karl-anisama. It was because father decided that as long as he has the support of Willian-sama, it will be possible to raise military achievements. Hence, it will be possible to raise the status of the Teirah family. Father is expecting a lot from you. That is exactly why I wish you to be careful. Now that father decided you are the type of person that can be used, you need to be careful… careful about what father will make you do and what he will decide to do with you once he gets the status after using you.”

Lutogarde´s words were ambiguous, but it answered all questions. It was obvious there were only a fixed number of seats at the [top]. In order for the Teirah household to go to the top, it is necessary to have the person sitting at one of the seats to move out. And from then on, it would be necessary to remove anyone that wanted to sit on their seat. It was difficult to believe that the Teirah household would leave Willian alone once they sat onto the seat.

“I will take those words to my heart.”

Willian didn´t know why Lutogarde was telling him those things. This could even be Louran´s trap. But even so, it was necessary for him to bear it in mind. To bear in mind that Louran Von Teirah was more troublesome of an existence than Willian had

expected.

“By the way, why are you telling me all that at a time like this?”

With Willian´s question, Lutogarde showed a smile different from the one she had been showing before. She was showing a pure smile.

“As a gift for having helped me.”

She happily answered. Willian felt a bit of deja vu, but he couldn´t remember anything out of it.

“Ah, we are wet to the skin. Let´s go back home, ok?”

“Yes, let´s go.”

Lutogarde firmly held Willian´s sleeve. Because of that action, which Willian had already lost any kind of discomfort or displeasure about, and also because of how the Teirah household really seemed like they were going to be problematic to him after all, Willian showed a wry smile under his mask.

“”I see, this is useful.””

Out of his expectations, Willian ended up becoming interested in masks, and also in the girl called Lutogarde.

“”Now then, how shall we make use of it?” “

The expression Willian was showing right now was also something being hidden by the mask. If he was to be careful about the expression of his lips, nobody would be able to notice his feelings. Willian now got in his hands two new weapons. The mask and Lutogarde. He didn´t have the slightest intent of trusting her, but he could see there was usefulness.

[][]

Nightmare

The servants of the Teirah residence warmly received the two, who were soaked wet. Wiping their body with a towel, they warmed themselves at the fireplace, which brilliantly burned. They drank a whole cup of warm stew. After finishing warming up themselves, the two parted ways.

One went to her room in order to make clothes for her friends.

The other one went to the room he was borrowing.

“Hey, Willian-kun. Could we talk for a bit?”

“Yes, of course.”

Willian was at his room. Louran Von Teirah was standing outside the room. Without any intentions of entering inside it, he was leaning onto the door.

“Let me give my thanks for having helped Lutogarde today. Thank you.”

“No, by thinking of how I am being looked after by you, doing this is only the obvious.”

“Ahaha, is that so?”

“Yes.”

The two fell in silence for a moment. In situations like that, Willian couldn´t carelessly open his mouth. Silence was golden; it wasn´t good for the [weaker side] to be the first to open the mouth.

“Lutogarde is smart, isn´t she? With how smart she is, she would have been useful if she was a man.”

Louran´s mood suddenly changed.

“Most of what that girl said is correct. I also won´t deny that. You are being used by the Teirah family, and you are using the Teirah family. It is a win-win situation that is extremely easy to understand. A wonderful interrelation. Let´s leave our emotions outside this. This is business. As long as it remains true, I will be [expecting] from you. I definitely want you to answer my [expectations].”

Even the very gentle Louran was like this under the cover of his pretense. Now that Willian knew about it, hiding it was unnecessary. Without his facade, Louran was much bigger and much more twisted than Willian had imagined.

“I understand.”

Willian could only say that. Because of many reasons, he couldn´t win right now. It was fine even if he was caught into a fight he couldn´t win. As long as he didn´t fight, he wouldn´t lose.

It was because of the mask. To the point of surprise, Willian was able to hold himself back in a collected manner and avoid fighting a war he couldn´t win. He was able to define the situation with composure. Without even noticing, Willian, whose mind had been chaotic these last few days, had gone back to clarity.

“”It is fine if I win another day. If I win in the end, it will be my win.””

Willian was showing a very dark smile. Louran, who was at the other side of the door, was probably having the same expression on his face. It was a relationship which both ate each other in their own interest.

Who was going to be the one eaten in the end?

At this night which Willian used a mask for the first time, he had a dream.

A black haired boy was hugging his legs and crying. There was a crowd of corpses in his surroundings calling for him in voices of resentment, and their hands would try to strangle him. Filled with malice, their bodies burned in hate. In the midst of that eternity of hate, the boy cried.

And only a single person, only a single corpse protected him.

“It´s alright, you are not wrong. It is not your fault.”

The girl spoke to him in a gentle voice. She had the same hair and the same eyes the boy had.

“Really? Is it really not my fault?”

The dead girl nodded with a smile. The surroundings booed. Even though the voices filled with resentment felt like they would crush them, the black haired girl protected the boy from everything.

Willian, who was wearing his mask, was simply watching the spectacle. At first glance, it looked like a love themed play, but…

“…glare*” (ギリィ)

But to Willian Rivius… to Al, which of the two was the salvation? Which of them was appropriate to him? Was it the corpses? Was it the girl? Was it destruction? Was it salvation? Was it hatred, was it love?

“Stop kidding me!”

Willian extended his hand. The black haired girl glanced at him and smiled. The corpses at the surroundings noticed that and charged at Willian as if he had become the target in the place of the boy.

“Gh!? I-I…!”

The wave of dead people engulfed Willian. When he was about to have his consciousness blown away, at the very last moment, the black haired girl embraced Willian. Just like she protected the boy, she was protecting Willian from the cluster of malice; she protected him from the crowd of corpses filled with hatred that burned his body.

“…”

The girl didn´t talk. She wouldn´t say words of comfort just like she was saying to the boy. Even though he wanted her to say something, even though he wanted to talk with her, no words came from her mouth. All she would give him was her smile and nothing more.

“Nee-san!”

At that instant, Willian´s world turned upside down.

“Hah, hah, hah, hah…”

A nightmare. It was a strange dream he didn´t even know if it was really a nightmare.

Willian got out of the bed. He could see from the reflection of the mirror that his whole body was covered in sweat and his appearance was very unsightly.

“Gulp*”

Willian gulped. He didn´t know what happened, or what meaning it had, and neither did he understand any of it. All he could feel was a feeling of happiness that was difficult to resist from and discomfort mixed up in a complex way.

“… What a wretched appearance.”

Willian moved his hand to his mask. There was no way he could show this face in front of people. Because he is performing as Willian Rivius, it definitely couldn´t be said that his current situation was fine.

“…”

Willian saw the world through the mask. His sight was being limited; with the outside

world being covered in darkness and his view being restricted by the thin boundary, Willian was able to return to normal.

"..Fuh."

Willian regained his calmness. He needed to go through his daily routine. Moving his heavy body, he stood up.

"Really, what has been happening to me recently."

Being amazed at how his mental state was unstable, he shook his head, saying "good grief". Then, he left his room in order to partake his routinely training.

Right now, Willian didn´t know that from now on he would have to convive with this nightmare for the eternity. (TL note: I don´t know if "eternity" would be in its literal meaning or that it was about him having to convive with that for the rest of his days. The word used is eternity, so I used it.)

[][]

Commerce

"By the way Willian-kun, if you have your hands free now, I would like to have you help me with a job. Of course, I will be paying you for that."

It was the first thing Louran said when he came to Willian´s room. Although Willian had just now been suppressing himself in his inner battle reasonably well, his consciousness now returned back to where he was, the Teirah residence, Arkas.

Besides that, Karl had things to deal with their ten-man squad, so he was out at the moment.

"A job, you say?"

Willian was someone that only had basic knowledge about jewels. He didn´t have technical knowledge about it.

"It is something that anyone that can read, write and do calculus can do. And unsurprisingly, there aren´t many people like that in Arkas."

Willian had nothing to do right now. He had been thinking about going out to meet Kail or visit Havella´s house, but this would be him just killing time. It was obvious to Willian which choice was the one that would let him learn the most things.

"In that case, I will give you my help."

A job the rich dealt with. It was the ideal opportunity for him to learn from the

experienced people.

“First question. How do you think “we” earn money?”

While they were in the carriage heading to the working place, Louran was asking Willian.

“By saying “we”, do you mean your company?”

“No, it would be better to say “we” in the meaning of the commerce as a whole.”

The commerce as a whole. If he had to answer it in only the general idea, then this was to the scope that Willian, who had experience in business, had knowledge of.

“The most primitive form of making money is by changing useless things into gold. The next thing we can do to earn money is by producing agricultural products. By exporting and importing, we can use the difference in the prices to make money. For instance, exporting water from a region that has abundance on it and selling it to a region that lacks it. And then, you just add some to the price. Also, working iron into houseware or into swords. By adding the service price, they can be sold for higher than simply selling just iron.”

Satisfied, Louran nodded.

“That´s right. To trade is to do any of those things you said, or perhaps, a combination of them. Whichever product you deal with, the basics don´t change. Buy cheaply and sell expensively. Everything is concluded in that.”

Louran paused for a bit before continuing…

“Then, why is it that our company can buy things cheaply? Why can we get gold for shipping expenses and indirect labor costs? Do you know it?”

Louran asked Willian. This too was part of the basics of trading.

“To make the most use of the prices in different locations and the added value of services… Stocking up the product in great quantities… I guess.” (TL note: I had to add so much to this sentence -.- The way it was said was so vague ¬¬ ->価値の差と付加価値、大量に仕入れ、かと<- Putting it here just in case -.-)

“Incredible. The third one in particular is one that surprisingly most people don´t notice. Just like you said before about the difference in prices and the added price for services, we buy gems in from the regions that produce them in great quantities as cheap as possible, cut in shapes and make ornaments with them for the added price, and then, we sell. From of all the money from the sellings, the money for the shipping charges and the additional services becomes our profit. This is how the flow generally goes. “We”, the companies affiliated to the Teirah family can then buy even more products from the same place, and so, cutting the unit cost for having purchased it in a big batch.”

“However, can we really cut the costs to such extents?”

Louran answered with a smile to Willian´s question.

“Once you start working, you will understand. You will understand about the foundation of trading, and also how much money we actually get from it.”

Louran said with confidence. Did he really earn that much money just like he was saying?

“This is something you still don´t need to know, but there is something you must never do as someone that runs business with jewelries; a certain flow you must never let yourself be carried by.”

Louran looked at Willian. That was something Willian needed to know now that he was going to participate in the business. By looking at Louran´s eyes, it could be said that he had dropped all the pretenses for a bit at that moment. Willian´s face became slightly stiff.

“It is to lower the price. Rather than that, you are to raise it. What people want is gems that have high prices put on them and not cheap stones that sparkle. What we deal with is something that is not part of anyone´s basic necessities in life. It is not even beverages or extravagant foods. If it is not precious, there is no meaning to it; once it is thought as having no value, it is the end. This is the same for the gem that is hanging at your neck. You should take this to your heart.”

Do not lower the prices. This was a strict rule, or so Louran said. Once again, Willian had no power over the situation. However, if he can help Louran, it is possible that he might be entrusted to a position that would deal with things of that sort. Rather, it was exactly with that intent that Louran asked Willian to take the job. The proof of that was how Louran was teaching Willian starting from the flow of commerce.

“Now then, we should soon be there.”

The carriage stopped and the two went outside. It was the best region of the residential district of Arkas, which was controlled by the first class citizens. Because it was prohibited for common people to enter the noble district, and since Louran was running a company, it was this kind of place that was the best to settle at. The place where most of the money flowed in Arkas was at this district.

In this place, rather than prestige, it was money that controlled everything. Because of that, the instant Lord Teirah left the carriage, the ambience at the surroundings completely changed. Many gazes pierced them.

“Good morning Lord Teirah.”

“Yes, good morning.”

They were quickly greeted by the people at the place, who were standing in a row. Louran invited Willian to come.

“Now, come here, Willian-kun.”

Once Willian got inside the building, a plain and organized place entered his sight. Unnecessary gaudiness wasn´t required at the workplace. 特に事務方が仕事しやすいよう無駄なものは一切排してある(TL note: No idea on that one -.-)

“Teach him how things work here.”

“Understood.”

Louran left Willian´s orientation to an office worker.

“Ah, I forgot to say one thing. I am thinking of having him one day become the president here. Guide him with that in mind.”

The workplace became in uproar. Everyone´s eyes gathered at Willian. Willian looked at Louran in surprise since he hadn´t heard anything about that.

“One day, Karl will succeed me. If his sword, you, are not in a position like this, you wouldn´t be able to discipline him, right? What, it isn´t anything difficult. All you need to do is to make money. If you think of any ideas, you should consult with me. From the

next day on, you will become the president of this place."

Louran was being lenient on Willian. Lenient to the point that it was too much. However, this was clearly a trap. That said, it wasn´t possible to avoid this trap. It was because he had chosen path to rise to prominence as Karl´s sword. Because of that, he was too much deeply indulged into it. He was too much deep into the position of the sword of Karl Von Teirah. By the time he noticed it, there was already the possibility that Willian was getting tightly bound by those chains.

"Do your best. During your assignment at this office work, do your job while thinking and feeling what the companies affiliated with the Teirah family lacks and what can become of advantage."

Willian finally noticed Lord Teirah´s aim. Willian intended to throw Karl away once he got some extent of power. If he was able to obtain money and status, he woulnd´t need to be a shadow. His plan was to leave someone of the likes of Karl behind and stand at the top.

""However, Lord Teirah is giving me all these favors so that I can´t cut off from Karl. If I become the president of a company affiliated to the Teirah family, he will be able to see the depth of the friendship between me and Karl. By the time I obtained enough power so that I could do as I wished, it wouldn´t be forgiven by society if I was to cut off from Karl. I see, so he had this sort of card in his hands.""

There was no way for Willian to refuse this request. After guessing some things, it was clear that their relationship was one ruled by power. Refusing such a good proposal was the same as saying that he had ill intents, and in his present situation, something like that was obviously a minus. In the end, it was preferable for him to jump into the flow.

""Really… In just one move, I got my hands tied."

Indeed, Lord Teirah was on a different level. He was an existence that managed companies. He was able to make such amounts of fortune. It was obvious that he wasn

´t average.

“”Well, I will jump into it for now. It is more convenient this way.””

He was still being played around by the flow. Besides that, all he could do was to choose the best option. Once Willian obtained the power to create flows like that, he would show Lord Teirah what he could do. Rather, it couldn´t be helped that he was getting excited for what was to come.

“First I will teach you starting from how to use the account book.”(TL note: I´m not sure in the meaning here ->まずは帳簿のつけ方から教えます<- What would ->つけ方<- mean?)

“Please take care of me.”

For that sake, it was necessary for Willian to gather everything he can. If he was able to get knowledge, there wouldn´t be disadvantages to it after all.

“…They earn that much money, those guys.”

After having a look at the account book, Willian made a surprised expression. He wondered if it was fine for someone to make so much money, and also wondered if the price for the gems in raw form was really that much cheap to begin with.

Willian looked at the ruby that was hanging by his neck.

“”You… If it wasn´t for how you don´t appear on the market, you would be surprisingly cheap.””

To make a price. Once again, Willian realised that the jewelry companies were manipulators, and that people would pay their money for “labels”. (TL note: I used “manipulators” for ->演出家<- because it wouldn´t make much sense otherwise. In this case, at least for only the ->演出<- part since I wasn´t getting much lucky by googling it -.-, this would mean like managing your workshop or company with some kind of aim. Some sort of marketing stuff -.- Since this was being highlighted in the line in a reaffirming meaning, I think manipulator would make a better word to represent that.)

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Karl´s undefeatable ten-man squad

The mountainous region of southwest Arcadia. Here was where Arcadia bordered with the small kingdom of Taiyar. One may ask why a little country was could border one of the seven kingdoms, but rather than that, it was exactly because it was one of the seven kingdoms, and because Arcadia was such a big kingdom that there were many country borders like this. Even if there was a difference in military power between the countries, it wasn´t possible for Arcadia to perfectly take control of all regions around.

The degree of priority of Taiyar wasn´t high for Arcadia. Because of that, they would fight in skirmishers. No, it used to be that way. Until now, that is…

“Now then, let´s go. You two will guard Karl-sama; leave the rest to me.”

It was a group with green mantles covered in dirt. By looking at them from close on, it looked like the earth and the scenery they assimilated with were moving. Throwing away their mantles, they went down the slope all together at once.

“Wha!?”

It was a surprise attack from above. By the time they were noticed, it was already too late. The flank of the enemy formation was caught from above.

“Hyu*”(ひゅ)

There was no way the enemy could do anything. In addition to that…

“Orah!”

Except for the person leading, all were armed with long spears. They had the high ground advantage, the advantage in equipment and also the tactical advantage. Complete and flawless. The formula for a decisive victory. In the end, the battle…

“White mask!?”

“It´s… the end.”

…had ended before it begun.

The amount of corpses in this battlefield at the borders of the kingdom had increased by ten. In an instant, the life of ten people were wiped out.

“Willian! Are you alright!?”

The blonde man who came running was Karl Von Teirah. The white masked man he was running in direction of turned his head to his way.

“Does it look like I am not alright?”

The white masked man, Willian Rivius, showed a refreshing smile and said in irony. Looking like Karl had calmed down, he made a relieved face.

“Alright, let´s move to the next place. It is a mountain battle after all. We need to get a few more achievements.”

“Compared to open-field battles, there is a wider viability of usage of tactics in mountain battles, isn´t it? Because the effectiveness of terrain is huge, just by getting a good position makes great difference in the battle, and because of the limited view, you can make ambushes and surprise attacks, right?”

“You studied well, didn´t you?”

“Ehehe. I did all the homework Willian gave me.”

“…If possible, I would like you to study on your own volition.”

“…I-I will do my best.”

It was the conversation between master and servant that would give inversed impressions their subordinates had already become used to seeing. Karl was the captain of the ten-man squad while Willian would be his counselor, but their relationship was one that Karl looked up to Willian independent of their positions. Of course, it was Karl who stood in public, and they wouldn´t cross that line. However, that relationship was a weird one which Karl was instead dissatisfied about being the one to get the fame.

“Even if we are getting only a few more, in mountain battles, it is easy to raise achievements. The sun is still high, so I still want to take two more heads. Ignahts will be at the front and Frank will be at the flank. If there aren´t any unexpected movement in the battlefield, we should be fine if we follow the same plan from yesterday. Karl-sama will stay in the middle and command the squad while I will protect the rear.”

“Understood.”

Ignahts was a small man full of spirit. Frank was a gentle, tall and calming man. Both

were talented man taken from the companies affiliated with the Teirah house at the time Karl was forming his ten-man squad. They were so-so in handling the sword, but because they were loyal to Karl, their value was different from the other soldiers. However, considering how their family and companies were being used as hostages to them, this was only the obvious.

Ignahts was at the front and Frank was together with the remaining ones. Willian, who was at the rear, wouldn´t let the squad move out until he confirmed that everyone took their positions. Recognizing that everyone had gone to their positions, he would wait in his place until there was a certain distance between them and him. This looked as if he was isolating himself in his own accord, but for Willian, him having the vision of their rear guard had a great effect. In addition, even if the enemy caught them, as long as the enemy didn´t surround him, it would be possible for him to run away. Therefore, he would take some distance from the others. And so, he would have some free time before moving out.

"…Hmph."

Just for fun, Willian kicked the head of the enemy ten-man squad captain that he had sent flying moments ago. Seeing the head rolling on the ground made Willian well up with a strange feeling of exaltation and a bit of a feeling of having conquered something.

"How was your life until now? Were you happy? Were you unhappy? Did you have a wife? Did you have a daughter, a son? Did you have friends?"

Willian couldn´t resist showing a smile filled with excitement.

"What a shaaaame. It is the end if you die, you incompetent. It doesn´t change anything if you were happy, or unhappy, or rich, or poor, or if you were a noble or a slave. You, who has died, is the one who lost, and me, who is still alive, is the winner. This is how everything goes."

Being carried by the of the words, he stepped at the man´s head. And at that instant…

“Hm?”

A bad feeling went through his chest. It felt like pain, it felt like sadness; it was an indescribable pain.

The image of the masked Willian was being reflected on the eyes of the man that were opened in a gruesome manner. An ugly beast. A scary beast that changed the death of the others, change unhappiness into his own pleasure. The [himself] that was being reflected deep in those eyes had a sad face.

“This… is everything, you ordinary.”

Saying that, Willian stepped onto the man´s head and crushed it with all his strength so he could ward off those illusions. The head became squashed. The blood splashed at Willian´s cheek, which he then wiped it off. The illusions, and also the pain disappeared. All that remained was…

“In the end, it is really good… War. It iss nice how so close to death it is, how the communication is simple, and also how plain simple it is to understand.”

A beast that wore the skin of human.

He covered his mouth with his hand and hid his smile. This was something even he knew. Just as he was aware of, that smile wasn´t something that would give people a good impression. Rather, it would give them discomfort. That was why he was hiding it.

“”Yes, masks are also useful for spreading [fame], so it isn´t that bad. It is also stylish.””

Since that day, Willian had been going to battles. Among those battles, there wasn´t even a single one that he went mad just like at that time at Raconia. In a composed way, he would sometimes let some of his steam off just like now, but after that, he would have everything under control.

“”Except at night…””

Since that day, he had kept seeing the same dream. The black haired girl and the boy, and also…

“”The crowd of corpses that keep increasing.””

The more battles he went in, the more corpses there was. The boy would hug his legs and cry like a victim. The girl would gently embrace him and protect him. It was a scene that for some reason really made him want to throw up. These last few days, rather than the corpses, it had been about those two that would make him feel uncomfortable. Why was that was something Willian didn´t know.

“”Oh, I should soon move out.””

Willian immediately removed all unnecessary thoughts. He could do that because the mask would reflect his self. (TL note: Not sure about this last line. ->仮面は自身を省みるもの<-)

““Fuh, I´m really being able to switch over it, aren´t I?””

As he would get in many battles, his fame would suddenly rise in the battlefield. Willian Rivius, the [white mask] that was part of the powerful ten-man squad: Karl´s ten-man squad. It was the undefeatable squad that kept changing the tides of battle. The name

of [white mask], their cornerstone member, was bit by bit, starting to resound through the battlefield.

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The reason behind the undefeatability

"Ah, Willian-san. Come over here."

Frank signaled with his hand for Willian, who had been following after him, to come.

"Right on the mark"

Just like Willian had planned, they had reached at the rear of the enemy. The enemy was ten men strong and were spread out in a square formation. There were pretty much no numeric differences, and for their attack, it was the ideal circumstances.

"……"

If this was the normal situation, they would have attacked them without hesitations. However, Willian was being silent.

""…The enemy is probably a centurion. His armor is different from the others.""

At the center of the enemy formation, there was a man that was using a different armor. Willian narrowed his eyes.

""My mind says that I can win. However…""

The place ahead Willian was looking at. Ahead was the figure of a man filled with confidence that waited for his enemy. By looking at the slight coldness being emitted by him…

"…We are pulling back."

….he decided to pull back. Although Willian had been putting everything in order for this favorable situation, he had given the order of retreat. This was something Willian would argue against if he didn´t care about Karl´s ten-man squad. However…

"U—su, then, is it fine for me to be in the front next time?"(TL note: U—su= yes)

Ignahts immediately accepted and recognized the order. The other people didn´t show any surprises in particular. When Willian says to pull back, it was because they were pulling back. This was the ironclad rule.

"Yes, we are going to wait for another opportunity at our next location. I will once again be at the rear."

The reason why Karl´s ten-man squad was undefeatable; Willian abandoning fights. Because of his insights, he had consistency in when to attack and retreat. He would take won battles with carefulness so he would not lose for nothing, and he would pull back from battles he couldn´t win.

"Then, everyone, let´s go."

With Karl´s orders, they started to retreat and moving to another location. Their well-organized and without hesitations movement was so orderly to the point of it being scary. They had no hesitation in retreating; having soldiers not lusting over battles was actually something unexpectedly difficult. It was difficult for one to get his intentions across over a whole squad.

“Alright, let´s go fast, but silently.”

“Captain, if you keep talking, Willian-san will get angry.”

“Mugu!?”(むぐっ！？)

It was difficult, but with Willian´s military experience and Karl´s personality, they were able to get their commands accepted. Because of the persuasive power of Willian´s experience and achievements and Karl´s likeable character, they were accepted without any objections. The atmosphere of their squad was considerably good. Their fighting power was also increasing.

“”It is fine like that for now. This is the best possible.””

Willian was doing his best. Him being thorough with everything was him doing his best.

“….”

But even so, the person himself…

“Shit.”

…couldn´t accept it.

——

“Hm?”

The man at the center of the formation.

On the man´s eyes, a presence that was slightly surging up reflected.

“Oh, white mask, is it? Kuku, he is a coward just like the rumors.”

The white mask´s squad had pretty much already finished retreating. It was commendable how the white mask was using the terrain so well and had made a situation which was difficult for them to be pursued. However, this was all. To the man, there wasn´t anything to [fear].

“Heeey white mask! How about we fight each other without you running away!?

While there was that, this was a war that had been making the man very stressed. In terms of strategy, everything he tried to do would be neutralized, and expect for the man himself, most were being led around by their nose really well. Because the man had confidence that he would be able to win if he was attacked head-on, he was filled with frustration.

“Hey, hey! Is it running all you can do!? The undefeatable white mask!”

If he couldn´t get very good trades, it wouldn´t be enough to make up for all they had lost. Actually, by looking at the whole battlefield, it could be seen it was their complete defeat. The equilibrium had already been broken. All the man´s main troops were doing was to pick up victories around and somehow mending the situation of the war. It was painful how he couldn´t even pick up those little victories.

“…Tch, he is really pulling back all the through.”

He was irritated, but he was also feeling admiration. The white mask had battle tactics that could perfectly read through the structure of his army and cut him from advantageous points, and his intuition that could see the opponent´s strength and judge whether to attack or retreat. Both of those were at a high level. And if one was to ask how badly the man was suffering because of that… (TL note: Not sure about the translation… I changed the words so that it would make sense. ->男にそれが出来るかといわれれば――<-)

“…I need to hold out somehow until reinforcements come.”

His plan of making himself a bait in order to attract enemies misfired. The Taiyar side´s situation was definitely not good.

―――

“This… shit.”

Thinking that it was good there was nobody around, Willian hit a tree with his fist with all his strength.

He couldn´t hear voices behind him anymore. They weren´t coming after him either. That´s why Willian didn´t hide his irritation.

“Even though I was supposed to be the one [superior]. Even though I was supposed to be stronger than a small fry like that, than a simple underling! Why am I!?

The fist he used to hit the tree was bleeding. Under the mask was a horrendous expression.

“For how long am I supposed to keep up like that! Strakules, Kail, those guys can understand it. They can even accept it. But… Why can´t I win even against a small fry like that!?”

Small fry. That was how that man reflected in Willian´s eyes. Because of the same reasons for others, he had kept retreating. His instincts were telling him that he couldn´t win against the man, but by its side, his reason was screaming, saying from the depths of his heart that Willian was the one superior.

“Until when will I keep… I… Even though I was supposed to be more capable than that.”

Willian had hit a bottleneck.

[][]

At the encamptment

The hundred-man army Ekkart. Those were the main forces of the Tayar region and they have been on the rise in their performance recently. At the encampment, the cheers continued. The war was pretty much already won. The regular soldiers would be able to go back to their home, and the dreams of the mercenaries and irregulars were welling up with ideas of what they could do once they got their payment.

“You are so noisy, Frank. It´s not like you guys were doing anything.”

Ignahts puffed up his cheeks. (TL note: I swear that´s exactly what is written there! 0.0 ->イグナーツは頬を膨らませる<- Such a kawaii man X_X)

“But you know, how bad would it be if he wasn´t here… The reason why we could move around freely as we well wished was because those two smashed through everything into a path for us.”

Frank looked downwards to Ignahts due to their difference in height. Ignahts showed an angry face and straightened his back. Even so, it was to no use. Frank tilted his head, wondering about the curious action, and Ignahts twisted his face in annoyance.

“All was because of Willian-san´s… Rather, all was because of Karl-sama´s strategy. We simply attacked at the places they would told us to. And then, we would gladly take the enemies on…”

“Haven´t Willian-san said so himself before? That strictly speaking, even pebbles count? As long as you can put some amount of pressure, anything is fine. That´s why.we were useful too. He said numbers are also important after all.”

“Hah, you can´t put the rewards we will receive and the ones the little pebbles will in the same level.”

“I guess. But I still think that we are getting it very easily. It doesn´t change the fact that all we have been doing was following what was being told to us.”

“With you putting it like that, it feels like we are pretty weak.”

Iknahts sat down. Frank followed him by lowering his head. In the end, there wasn´t anyone that could work their heads other than Willian, and except for the centurion of the Ekkart army, all the other ten-man captains had already perished.

“Ah, sorry for having you wait, you two. The meeting is over now.”

Karl suddenly showed up from the tent and approached the two people who were waiting for him.

“No, please don´t mind. So, how did it go?”

Iknahts, who was sitting down, stood up, and Frank also corrected his posture.

“Hm, I guess it is the same as always?”

The three exchanged glances and quickly left the place. Once they were far enough, Karl sighed.

“However, as to be expected, it is really depressing. The way people talk about the plans Willian came up with as if they were mine…”

With an angry face, he let out those words.

“But even so, didn´t Willian-san said that was fine?”

Karl´s face became even more frowny because of Iknahts´ question.

“Rather than having accepted it, it is more like he is entrusting it to me. He said that it would be more persuasive if I was the one talking to them.”

If it was by Karl, he would have everyone know about Willian´s incredibleness. He was feeling guilty because of how it looked like he was taking all the fame for himself, and he also didn´t like how he was using Willian.

“Perhaps this might be a bit rude, but as to be expected, I believe that the words of a noble and those of a foreigner have different weights. Perhaps, from an outside perspective, it might be easier and better for people to accept if Willian-san is the sword and Karl-sama is the head.”

It was an explanation very much Frank-like. It was probably the truth, but Karl had many things he couldn´t accept about it.

“Well, wouldn´t it be fine to just put up with it? If we follow Willian-san´s plans, we will never lose, right?”

“I don´t think it is good to be proud about that…”

“Yes, yes, Frank is really the goody two shoes.”

“Ahaha, I guess for now we should go get Willian and ready the arrangements for tomorrow.”

“Yeah.” “Yes.”

In order to have the arrangements prepared, the three went to where Willian was waiting for them.

The three went inside the tent that was given to Karl´s ten-man squad. The tent wasn´t big or spacious, but it was still an incredible item that could be carried around by packing it, was light to carry and also could protect them from the wind to some extent.

“We are bac… Hm?”

Willian, who would normally be there thinking about the battle plans with the map spread out on the small table, would be greeting them now, but this time…

“……..”

Willian was sleeping.

“……”

The three of them were dumbfounded. He was sleeping, peacefully breathing while sitting on the stool and having his mask on.

“…H-how early… I just witnessed something unbelievable.”

Iknahts expressed his surprise with a low voice so that he wouldn´t wake Willian up. Frank silently nodded, agreeing to him. Karl was also surprised, stupiditly looking at that scene.

“Wh-what´s the matter?”

In surprise, Frank hurriedly asked Karl.

“…Let´s for now leave the tent.”

As if all the three had been already planning on doing so from the start, they left the tent.

The three were being surrounded by a mood that made it hard to talk.

“So even that person sometimes does show his weak side just like that.”

Frank quietly muttered. Inahts responded, saying “Indeed”.

“He looked tired these last few days, so I guess even if it is Willian we are talking about, there will be times he can be like that. Yeah.”

“Well, we were in a series of battles after all. We didn´t get to go back to Arkas for some time.”

“Also, these last days, it had been pretty much Willian-san that was moving our hundred-men army from behind the scenes, so I guess he would be having a proportional amount of anxiousness.”

Through Karl, Willian had been giving proposals about the movement of their army. In order for the proposals to be accepted, they also had to do things like bribery and flattering so that they would get Ekkart´s favor. It was only the obvious that Willian, who was by himself being responsible of the forefront work and the work behind the scenes, would get exhausted. In addition to that, he had to constantly keep their military exploits at the top, so what he was doing was not something ordinary.

“What will we do about our strategy meeting?”

Because of Ignahts words, Karl gave an irritated groan. After thinking for a bit, he said.

“Let´s more or less think about our plans, and then tomorrow, we will have Willian check it up. If we don´t rest for a bit, Willian will punish us.”

“Right. Since right now we are pretty much at a winning position, there shouldn´t be anything that would give us problems… What do you think about it, Ignahts?”

“I will leave that for you to think. After all, I´m not good at thinking just like you and Karl-sama.”

“Well then, let´s the three of us think about tomorrow´s plans… and then, let´s go sleep together!”

“!?”

Karl was being all excited. Yes, because the tent was being occupied by Willian, Karl

needed to stay together with the other squad members. Karl, who had immediately risen to be the leader of a ten-man squad after the great battle of Raconia, had the privilege to sleep inside a tent. However, Karl himself wanted to sleep outside together with everyone. Right now, Willian, who would keep babbling about his image, wasn´t nearby like he would usually be.

Even though they were at a winning position, they wouldn´t wake up Willian, who was needed for the planning. All this resulted in Karl being able to sleep outside. This was the outbursting of Karl Von Teirah´s supreme plan.

“Bu-but for the o of the Teirah family to be sleeping outside…”

Frank let out a trembling voice. If it became known that Karl had slept outside, it couldn´t be imagined what Frank´s father, whose company was affiliated to the Teirah family, would say to him. What was even more scary was if that would incur Lord Teirah´s wrath. In the worst case, his family would be wiped out. Ignahts, who was more or less in the same position, also had his face become pale.

“At the end of the day, father is just some rich upstart. Now, now, let´s have our strategy meeting, and then, we are all sleeping together.”

“…It can´t be said that a noble family that had just three generations is just a simple rich upstart family though…”

“The other nobles say that though!”

“The-then, the conduct a noble should be taking…”

“Really, I will stop asking then. This is an order. The order of a noble!”

While the two couldn´t even let out any sounds, being in a different page, Karl was all cheery, seeming as if he was mistaking all this as some kind of sleepover. And then, the two…

“”That can´t be good.””

….said in unison.

[][]

Tower of karma

[Willian Rivius] was raised at a world that stinked of darkish sewer water. He was at the bottomest and was poor to no. This place was the beginning of the world, and was its end too.(TL note: Literal translation. I don´t know what the author means by saying that □ ->此処が世界の始まりで、此処が世界の終わり。<- Maybe it is that the poor people that do all the labor work, so they are the pillar that sustains the world, but even so, they are so poor that they are were it ends too…? ^^ I´m not sure… .-.)

He would drink muddy water. He would eat bread made of Kabi in small bites, and he would believe that was happiness. It was an unhygienic life where you would be the one of the first ones to die if disease spread. It was a daily life where people´s death was common. There were also times where the starving people would need to nibble on copses in order to make it through the winter. Anything would be done if it was in order to keep living.

If they were beasts, it would be fine like that.

If they weren´t humans, it would be fine like that.

However, may the world take care.

The ones that can change the world are people that at some point in time strayed from the path of humans.

[Al] was crying. [Arlette] would gently embrace him. Just like the [usual], the surrounding corpses would move around them and would keep raising voices of resentment. But there was something different from the [usual]….

"…I can… move?"

It was the fact that [Willian] could move. This spectacle of a dream where [Willian] wouldn´t be able to do the slightest movement changed into a world where he somewhat unconsciously was able to move. [Willian], who in his dreams would only be able to have the point of view that was in a certain way that of a god, for the first time was able to step onto this world with his own feet.

"...Am I wearing my mask?"

Sweeping his hand at his face, he found a foreign object. That roughness he was familiar with let [Willian] know that the object was the mask he would usually use.

"Well, fine."

One step.

"Wha-!?"

The ones that were coiling around his legs was the owner of the bookstore of foreign books that had taken care of him in the past, Norman, and his wife. Their appearances were gruesome, and at their eye socks, there was an abyss nothing could be used to describe. With horrid corpse-like looks that had parts with skin and others with only bones, they clinged onto [Willian]´s legs.

"Why did you betray us? Even though we trusted you so much. Even though we thought of you as our own son. WhhhhhhhhhhhhhhHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHYYYYYYYYY!?"

"Tch, move over! You were in my way! In order to have myself killed, I needed to kill everyone that knew about [Al]. As to be expected, even with my presence being weak, you guys would´t forget about me. That´s why I killed you! If you understand that, get

lost!”

[Willian] swung his leg and sent Norman and his wife flying.

Two steps.

“You aren´t Willian. I am Willian. You aren´t Norman either. You aren´t even Al. Then, who are you? What are you? WhAt aM i? WhY dId I HavE To DiE?”

A red haired corpse was hanging onto Willian´s right arm while being dragged on.

“Ha! Aren´t you stupid and miserable, Willian-kun! In any case, you would have died a dog´s death along the way anyway. Rather than that, you should be thankful, you know? For me to be using your name!”

[Willian] shook off the corpse that was clinging on his right arm and sent it flying.

Three steps.

“WhY?”

Four steps.

“I dOn´T WaNt To DIe.”

Five steps.

“I WanT tO mEet wITH My FamILY.”

Six steps.

“fOr tHe sAKE Of mY nAtiON.”

Seven steps…

[Willian] shook off everything and moved forward. He wouldn´t take any notice of the corpses he had killed. It didn´t matter. It didn´t matter what happened to other people. He wouldn´t even give them a glance.

“…As expected, you guys are really annoying, aren´t you?”

After going through the crowd of corpses, the ones who were ahead was [Al], a black haired boy who was crying while hugging his legs, and [Arlette], a black haired girl who comforted him.

“You are doing such a pathetic expression while using my face.”

[Willian] threw some words at [Al] as if he was spitting them. Getting frightened in reaction, [Al] raised his face. After looking at [Willian], he twisted his face in dislike.

“What are you making this face for?”

[Willian] moved his hand to the sword at his waist. [Al] got surprised, but at that instant,

a certain person got in between them. [Willian] frowned.

“Ha, so at the end of the day, you are going to get in my way? Arlette-neesan!”

[Willian] had raised his voice aggressively, but the hand that was holding the sword at his waist didn´t move.

“You aren´t me. I am nee-san´s knight. I am not a monster like you.”

A straight refusal. [Willian] became irritated at that.

“…Don´t be kidding me. You say that even though I became like this because you wished for it! Because I am nee-san´s knight, because you wished that I cleared away nee-san of her regrets! We wished for that! That´s why I am here!”

“That´s wrong! What nee-san wished was for me to live in peace. Despite how I wished to get her revenge, what are you doing now? You killed so many unrelated people and committed crimes that had no meaning, and you still don´t even know the face of the man that killed nee-san. Are you supposed to be nee-san´s knight like that!? All you´ve been doing had nothing to do with nee-san!”

“Th-those were necessary steps. Nee-san is everything to me. That´s why, because they stole her from me, I need to steal from them even more.”

“Even if nee-san wished for something like that, that was only killing count Vrad. It´s not more, nor less than that.”

[Willian] was being talked down by the [himself] who was far smaller and weaker than him.

“Just like Kail had said before, you should have backed out from this war. You are twisted. Too twisted. You forgot her original wish, and you were doing bad things while using nee-san as an excuse. You don´t have any intent on taking revenge on nee-san at all. You don´t really love nee-san. You can´t be loved by anyone.”

At some point in time, a mountain of corpses had piled up behind [Al]. They were wiggling around and roaring out their resentment, waiting for their time to move, wondering when they would be able to engulf [Willian].

“Someone as bad as you can go die. We will kill Vrad in your stead. And after that, it will be over. And then, just like nee-san wished for, we will live in peace. We will live quietly in modesty together with Kail and Havella. Yes, let´t become friends with Karl and Lutogarde too. If only you were to die, everything would….”

While [Al] was in middle of his talking, [Willian] threw his sword, which pierced [Al]´s belly. [Al] stopped talking and looked at [Willian].

“I see. I see… It is just like you said. I am mad. I am a failure as nee-san´s knight. …But, what about it?”

The eyes that were deep inside the mask were trembling. The ruby hanging at his neck was shining like blood.

“At that time nee-san was eaten, I was born. I thought you had died at that time. But you were still living, weren´t you? And while you were hugging your legs and crying just like that… you were just waiting to eat me! Kuhaha, there is no salvation for me!”

As if to protect [Al], [Arlette] silently stood in the way. [Willian] showed a smile.

“Arlette-neesan. She would always protect me. Even after dying… she was preserving my heart. But I don´t need to be babysitted anymore!”

[Willian] straggled [Arlette]´s neck. With both hands, as if he was gently hugging her…

“I loved her. I loved her more than anything in the world. Even now I love her. But even so, that´s why I won´t use her as an excuse anymore. I can´t do that. Even if it started like that, this path I am going through isn´t revenge.”

He was twisted to a point of no hope. Since the beginning, he was already completely twisted. He didn´t have even a bit of sense of guilt for stealing from others. Rather, it was as if he felt only joy at doing that. There was no way this could be considered a revenge of Karma.

“I am quitting using her as an excuse, lying about doing revenge and trying to make justifications for myself. She is part of me; the excuse that this desire of revenge that had been dormant somewhere in my heart is… But, it is fine now. I became strong. Even if she isn´t here anymore, I am fine.”

Even while she was being strangled, [Arlette] didn´t stop smiling. That was an illusion that existed somewhere in [Willian]´s memories. It was a dream he wouldn´t be able to reach out his hands to for the eternity. It made him want to drown himself into those dreams. It made him want to jump into those sweet dreams. However, [Willian] wouldn ´t allow that to happen.

“Are you going to kill Arlette-neesan!?”

[Al]´s angry roar strongly reverberated through [Willian]´s earlobes. With a twisted face, [Willian] looked at his eyes.

“Hey, hey, rather than me wanting to kill her or anything, nee-san had already died a

long time ago. This I am holding in my hands right now is just a dream. Would she always be smiling like that? Did she love me? Nobody knows that kind of thing!”

[Al] was trembling.

“The nee-san that would [sell flowers] we don´t know of. The reason why nee-san wanted to leave that shitty house despite the money she would leave to me that we didn´t know of. Did you think you knew her true self? We were satisfied just with the one side of her that was given to us, and we were averting our eyes from the bitter reality. This is what I´ve been doing. This is what you are.”

“That´s wrong! Nee-san loved me, and I also loved nee-san. Here was the world that belonged just to the two of us! That´s why there is meaning in the revenge!”

“There is no way for us to be sure of that anymore. Nee-san is dead. Before we could hear her true words, and before seeing her bad side that perhaps might have existed, nee-san died. Of course, even if I were to know of it, I have confidence I would still love her. Even if she didn´t love me that much, I have confidence I would always love her. However, there is no way for us to know that. This thing that is in my hands is nothing more than a convenient dream after all!”

Without the slightest hesitation, [Willian] broke the neck of the illusion he loved with his hands. Raising a dry sound, [Arlette] had crumbled down for the eternity. [Al]´s scream resounded through that world.

“I won´t use her as an excuse. Of course, I will give Vrad, who stole her, a suitable amount of pain. However, even that I will be doing it because I want to do so myself. If I hate, I will steal. If I am angry, I will steal. If I want, I will steal. In the way I see fit, I will be mad to my heart´s content.”

With his hands, [Willian] broke the revenge called [Arlette].

“The next will be you, little boy.”

[Willian] and [Al] were exchanging glances.

“You are mad.”

[Al] took out the sword the sword that pierced his belly and pushed it at [Willian]´s stomach with all his strength. Without quivering, [Willian] received the attack.

“Yes, I am mad. And from now on… I will continue being mad.”

[Willian] hit [Al] at the side of his face. [Al] was sent flying.

“You had always been inside me. While I was killing people, you were whispering: This is wrong, you can´t do these things. Sometimes, this would hurt, sometimes it would make me hesitate. … The conscience filled with gentleness, love, moral and ethics I was supposed to have already thrown away a long time ago… That is what you are.”

Even while he was down on the ground, [Al] continued to glare at [Willian].

“You are doing wrong!”

“Maybe. But I won´t stop going forward.”

With his right foot, [Willian] stepped on [Al]´s head with all his strength.

“I kept denying you. I didn´t want to see you. The me who kept using nee-san as an excuse. I didn´t want to accept those things.”

[Willian] was rubbing his foot at [Al]´s head. He could hear cries. He could feel the sensation of conquest at his feet. This was joy. This was Karma.

“But I will accept all of you. I am good and evil. I am also the one that stepped over both good and evil. This increasing number of corpses, you, who keeps giving me a glare of disapproval, and also all these excuses; all this are things that composes me.”

“If you want to stop me, you can´t try as much as you want. I will rise even higher. I am so thirsty, but so thirsty that it can´t be helped. I want it so much, but so much that it can ´t be helped. I want this and that; money isn´t enough, status isn´t enough, to the me that has nothing, there is no way other than stealing.”

[Willian] headed towards the crowd of corpses. The corpses faltered at the irregularity.

“To steal is to satisfy oneself.”

[Willian] stepped over Norman´s wife, who he had a great debt of gratitude.

“To satisfy oneself is to win.”

He stepped over the red haired Willian.

“After continuing to win and after I satisfy myself, what will be the scenery in front of me? Will it be glittering? Will it be warm? Will it be pitch black? Will it be cold? To begin with, is there even anything that can satisfy me?”

He was stepping over the numerous corpses and was rising up. He didn´t have any hesitations anymore. Without faltering with his steps, he looked straight to the [top]. An absolute confidence, a firm pride. In order to prove that he was himself, step by step, he kept walking and kept proving himself of that.

“You… are doing wrong!”

He could hear [Al]´s shouts from [below].

“Kuku, keep shouting. Resentment is blessing, struggling is commendable; this thundering gospel of cries!”

The shouts of the corpses reverberated. The cries of resentment filled with hatred and the pulsation made by the corpses crawling away so that they are not stepped over followed along his feet. All this was turned into his joy, and also turned into his strength.

“If I show you any openings, you may kill me. If I show weakness, you may overthrow me anytime.”

Of course, [Willian] had no intentions of showing nor openings, neither weakness. However, he was on his guard. The karma he had built up was still midway, but even though he had just started, it was already this tall. If the day he satisfies himself and reaches the top comes, not even [Willian] could imagine how high would it become, nor how many lives would he need to step over.

Because of that, he needed to be cautious. Much more now that he reflected over the number of inhuman misdeeds he had built up, he asked himself whether he would be able to advance forward without hesitations or not. Of course, the answer for that question was…

“This starts from here. World, have you made your resolve? I did mine; the resolve to

eat with might. We are hungry. We are thirsty. We can´t tend ourselves in any way other than stealing. This is who [we] are; a born usurper. May we head forward through our path!" (TL note: Chuuni ^^)

On the tower of corpses, a king was reigning. Now, the tower was still small, and the king was still weak. However, after he continues to reap life and continues to steal, this tower would definitely become far taller. The authority of the king who would reign over it would increase to no bounds.

All this would become the king´s power.

"I won´t give up! One day, I will stop you… and then, I..!"

"Fuh, though I think you were late on that a long time ago… Well, do your best."

Now that [Willian] had become aware of himself, even [Al] was nothing more than part of the pile of corpses. (TL note: 認識してしまった以上<- It only says he became aware of something, or accepted. I guessed it to be himself, but I am not sure… I am just putting it here just in case^^)

"…Do as you wish. With your own feet, through your own path…"

Whether those words were [Arlette]´s, or then… (TL note: In that case, would this mean that brother sister fusion mode might come back???? 0.0 I hope so T.T)

"I intend on doing that. Thank you for taking care of me until now."

[Willian] gave his thanks. He thanked to [Arlette]´s and [Al]´s existences. It was because they spent all this time on him that [Willian] could get the strength to be reigning over at the top of the corpses. If they weren´t here, once he was engulfed by the corpses, he

would have been downgraded into nothing but a beast. (TL note: I´m not sure about the “jikan wo kaketa” part… ->此処まで時間をかけたからこそ、『ウィリアム』はこの亡者の上に君臨する力をつけた<-)

“Now then, let´s move on.”

The masked king reigned by himself at the top of the tower of dead bodies.

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Willian's awakening

"....."

Willian slowly opened his eyes. As if he was certifying himself of his own existence, he swept his hand at his face. He could feel the roughness and the inorganic coldness of the mask at the tip of his fingers.

Willian checked his current situation. The shine of the candle had been gone long ago and the sounds of the banquet that was supposed to be happening outside the tent had vanished. In fact, most of the sounds had been gone and all he could hear was the sound of the trees.

"...Midnight, is it?"

Willian left the tent.

It was the usual darkness of the night you couldn´t see pretty much anything. The shine of the stars were distant and small to be of help.

"...I can see."

Willian slowly walked outside. He sneaked away from the encampment that was built in the middle of the mountains and he walked by himself at the deep night that even beasts would be sleeping at the time. His steps were as if he wasn´t actually walking deep at the night. His steps that lacked any hesitation would properly find their way to the ground. The uneven ground felt as if it was flat.

"...I can hear."

As if he was dancing, Willian´s heart was beating faster. The music was the orchestra of the night wind and the sound of the trees. (TL note: I´m not sure about this part here -> 踊るようにウィリアムは弾む<- From the japanese dictionary, this ->弾む<- can mean about when the breathing gets faster or when the heart pulsate faster when people do exercise or when they become happy. The dictionary translation was saying that it meant “get lively”. Saying that Willian became livelier as if he was dancing feels too weird, so I put it there.)

“It smells.”

The mountain was filled with smells. The smell of earth, the aroma of the trees, and from the distance, the smell of humans and iron, and some traces of the fragrance of blood. It was filled with scents; the world was filled with smells.

“Was it this much? Was it really to this extent!?”

Everything he was seeing was new. Everything he heard was fresh to him. Everything he smelled was vivid. The things he would touch, and the things he would taste were probably going to be new to him as well. The world had changed to these extents. Simple sceneries were enough to the point of making his eyes shine, simple sounds were to the point of making him want to dance, simple scents were to the point of making him “erect”; he was sharply feeling everything. (TL note: ->エレクト<- I swear it was this that was written D;)

“Ku, kuhaha. Aren´t you mean, Kail! You´ve been seeing this kind of view all along, weren´t you? You were feeling this world. This is not fair, you guys!”

The world was this much beautiful.

“Ahahahahahahaha!”

The world was this much fragrant.

“Is this the world you guys see? ……..It is beautiful, and also….”

The masked man was pouring out a great number of corpses from him. A crowd of dead bodies. He was the king of the dead, who was surrounded by them and reigned over them.

“…and also, it is such a cruel and shitty world! It is cruel, noisy, and it stinks! But it is good. This is good. It is fine like that! I will paint this beautiful world with harshness. I will get my hands over everything that beautifully shines, and also that which horridly rots, and I will not leave anything for any of you. Everything, will be mine!”

Willian Rivius ruled over. (TL note: He will lose again, won´t he? -.-)

“Now then, world. Let´s begin! Will I eat you, or will I be eaten. Let´s face each other!”

The being that would usurp everything has been born.

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“…Eh? What is it now?”

“We are changing plans. We are in a good form today.”

Willian patted Karl, who was making a reluctant face, on his head.

“Believe in me.”

Karl was feeling anxious about how Willian´s aura was different from how it was until yesterday. But even so, Karl could only believe in Willian. He could only nod to him.

“Thank you. I will put my trust on you.”

What results would this change that Karl was anxious about bring?

“…Tha-that´s a joke, right?”

An unimaginable view unfolded in front of Ignahts eyes.

The banner of the Arcadian army was hovering over the summit. By the maps, that location would be considered part of the Tayar region; a land which Arcadia had never committed to. Perhaps this would be only temporary for now, but in either case, it had fallen to Arcadia´s hands.

This had been any better than they having taken over a single base, and looking at it in a good way, at most, they had taken control of one mountain. However, if the ones that had captured it were only a ten-man squad, this would become a different story.

“Sure, we didn´t go that much further, but even so, is it fine for nothing more than a ten-man squad to have come all the way here?

The enemy was splitting their army in groups, so all of them knew that they couldn´t leave it up to raw fighting strength. But even so, nobody thought that their base would fall. If it was the fighting strength of a hundred-man squad, it might not be impossible.

However, the risk for doing that would be high.

“Don´t worry. We are doing war. There is no such thing as winning being bad.”

They were at the front lines at the borders of the enemy country. It wasn´t possible for one to know what was happening inside the country. It wasn´t known exactly how many soldiers they had. That was why usually people wouldn´t take the risk. Even for a hundred-man squad, it was difficult. To a ten-man squad, doing this wasn´t being sane.

“If we see the number of soldiers from the deployment of troops of the next few days from now, we will be able to more or less know how many soldiers they will commit to this war. Despite how much badly they had been cornered into a position of disadvantage, they didn´t reinforce their defences. They couldn´t. This was because they didn´t have spare soldiers for that.”

There was a body fallen by Willian´s feet.

“This guy made a mistake in his plans. He needed to throw away his pride and reputation and focus all the strength on their base. If he had done that, we wouldn´t have been able to take it down. The reason why they didn´t do that was because of their pride, and also because of his mistaken self-conceit.”

Willian looked at the lined up heads. One of the heads was the head of the centurion Willian had ran away from on the day before. The rest were the ten-man squad captains that were protecting the base.

“Because they believed that they would win against me, they had faced us right in the middle of the battlefield with the same square formation from the day before. They had misread me; misread us.”

Willian turned his eyes away from the heads as if he held no interest on them. Willian´s

interest wasn´t being directed at them anymore.

“That´s why they lost.”

It was just like Willian said. Yesterday, they were in the same place they were previously, and they were organized in the same formation they were before, and they received an unexpected surprise attack from Willian and his squad. Because of that, they lost.

“”It was in an instant. It was only an instant until Willian-san´s sword cut through that centurion´s head. Somehow he feels like he is in another whole level. I can´t say anything but that. To be fair, the Willian of today is as much strong as he is being scary. He is sharp like a blade.”

Was it because today in particular he was in a good condition? Or will he continue being like that? This was something nobody knew. All Karl knew was a single thing…

“Karl-sama. We shall win. For the sake of the Teirah house. I will also do to my utmost.”

“Ye-yes.”

Willian raised his hand to the sky.”

“Let´s keep winning.”

One of the bases of Taiyar had fallen by just a ten-man squad. They had taken down a centurion. It had been a victory for Arcadia.

Since then, all the scorn Karl´s undefeated ten-men squad would receive vanished, and they started being known as the strongest ten-man squad of Arcadia in the true meaning of those words. The battles Karl´s ten-man squad was deployed would be won. They were strong to the point of that being spoken of them…

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Willian and Kail

Willian was walking at the city of Arkas. His plans for the night were very tight in time, but right now, he had free time. Because Karl was playing around at the garden and glancing at Willian´s room with longing eyes, it ended up that Willian had to quickly run away. It couldn´t be helped that he was already exhausted from the reception he was receiving from Karl since the start of his vacation.

“And so, with all that explained, please train with me.”

“…Yesterday I had a match, so I am tired right now though.”

Willian had come Kail´s house, and was now standing at the front of it. Because of how he would only visit Kail sometimes, and because his white hair would stand out, he would wear a wig and a hat. Because the mask would do the opposite effect and stand out too, he wouldn´t wear it.

“Wait a bit. I will sort myself out.”

In the end, Kail had a soft spot for Willian.

“Dzua!”(ヅアッ！)

“Mu!”(むっ！？)

A parade of corpses enveloped Willian. When Kail saw that, he knew. He knew that Willian had understood the monster that was inside him. Willian had understood himself, and now had learned the technique to bring himself to his limits. (TL note: The word used for “parade” here is ->葬列<-, which is actually some kind of “parade”

(maybe saying it like that is a bit disrespectful >_<) that people do when someone dies. They carry the coffin and walk to the place it is going to be buried. (Or maybe where the funeral is going to happen? I don´t remember -.-)

"How is it, Kail! I also learned how to do it too!"

The corpses laughed. "Katakatakatakatakatakatakata…" Both in joy and in displeasure… (TL note: Isn´t there that japanese horror monster that is a long haired girl that gets out of the TV and does that weird noise? Imagine that sound effect there.)

"That´s right. With that, it became even easier to understand it, right?"

Suddenly, a chill. Willian´s skin was full of goosebumps. And then, the corpses stopped laughing.

"Both of us are now able to clearly see our current limits. Or then, well, something like that."

Kail let out from his whole body something unimaginable. It was a giant, or better said, a giant warrior. The Willian of right now couldn´t imagine how much training would he need to do, and how much carnage did he need to go through in order to bring forward something as strong as that warrior.

"I will be relying on you to take easy on me."

"I´ve been doing so all this time though? Skinny-kun."

By looking at the difference in power they had, it was possible to understand it liking it or not. It was possible to understand the distance he had from Kail as a warrior.

“Daraaah!”(だっらぁぁあああ！)

“Slow, light, weak.”

Recently, Willian had been undefeatable at war, but even so, it didn´t feel like he had even the slightest chance of winning against Kail. Willian was in a situation that he would be sent flying by his humming.

“Ouch, take it a bit easier.”

“I am taking it very easily. Even if you are in that state.”

Willian was all sweaty, and in comparison, Kail didn´t have even a single drop of sweat. The difference between them was experience. Willian´s friend was an existence that was very far further than him as a warrior to the point of it being annoying to him.

“There are only monsters at the coliseum after all.”

“No, I think you are going on the right track. I have said it before, right? I am strong.”

There was a trace of fatigue somewhere in Kail´s words.

“Could it be that you became the champion?”

“No comments. Well, even if I became it, there would be no meaning. Even if I have money, I have no way of using it, and even if I am surrounded by glory, it would be

ignored by the people that want part of the glory.”

Dejected, Kail dropped his shoulders. Willian, who more or less guessed the situation, patted Kail´s shoulder. And then, remembering how he was being beaten, he started to feel a bit playful.

“By the way, I haven´t seen Havella around these days.”

“W-we weren´t talking about Havella though?”

Kail was flustered to the point it clearly showed on his face. When Willian looked at him acting like that, it took his all to hold his laugh back. He might have even Pfffed* a bit.(TL note: That “pfff” sound you do when laughing. I couldn´t find any verb for that -.-)

“Her busy season has already ended though? The summer festival has already passed, so if it is just like it had been these years, it should be her vacation right now.”

Kail silently nodded at Willian´s words.

“I had nothing to do at the time, so she treated me with a meal.”(TL note: I don´t know if it was Kail who treated Havella, or it was him the one being treated because it doesn´t specify T.T ->暇になったと思って昨日食事に誘ったんだがな<- It is probably Havella though, since it would make more sense)

“…Yesterday, is it? Could it be that it was also yesterday that you became the champion?”

“…No comments.”

Willian wanted to go to a bar to hear more of Kail´s too easy to understand excuses while ordering a lots of drinks, but because there was something he was worried about and because he had plans at night, there was no way he could be getting drunk.

“Once I finish this job, let´s the three of us hang out. Let´s put emphasis on the “three of us”.”

Kail put his hand on head. Willian ignored that and started thinking.

“Hang out, “the three of us”? That´s weird, even though

He knew about Havella´s attachment about the “three” of them being together. But letting aside Kail´s ideas, it was weird how he would propose this, which in his current situation it wouldn´t be possible to do, despite how even Havella understood how that wasn´t possible. No matter how much Willian was to disguise himself, if all the three were appear together in public, it was possible that he could be exposed by some kind of chance. Right now, except for places that there weren´t many people, it couldn´t be said that it would be acceptable.

Despite all that, for the three of them to hang out, and besides, about the reason for Kail to go his way to say that could only be…

““Well, no matter how much I think, this can´t be helped, I guess.””

He didn´t have enough information to consider about his situation. Even if he was to think, all he would do was to go in circles.

““Besides, if I don´t go soon…””

By looking at the sky, it could be seen that the sun was leaning towards the east

considerably. He needed to make the preparations for tonight´s plans, so he couldn´t be late.

“Then, I will be going now.”

“Hm, are you busy with something?”

Kail, who was intending to do the whole course of training, looked at Willian.

“Kinda. There will be a very important party. The one being invited isn´t me though.”

“I see. I don´t really know about it, but do your best.”

Kail would be very careful about this kind of things. He wouldn´t inquire Willian about it, nor would he try to step into it. He was the type of person to separate private life very clearly.

“The next time we meet, I will be so strong that I will beat you to a pulp.”

“Then, this would mean that we won´t be able to meet for ten years.”

The two laughed. Whether it was for Willian or Kail, they could only show their smile among the three of them. Those bonds were more important than anything. Or at least, they still were…

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Eahart von Arcadia

The carriage Willian and Karl were on was shaking. They were sitting in a position which both were facing each other. Karl had a slightly frowny face.

“Where did you go on the afternoon? Even though I was planing for us to play together until night…”

“…Have you finished your homework?”

“…Oh, I am so excited for the party… Hehe…”

The conversation stopped there. The number one method to have Karl shut up was that. It was to give him some kind of question to solve. Then, he would keep quiet until he finished solving it. Karl would do his utmost to solve any questions given to him, but it was weird to him how Willian would give him questions that while were solvable for him, who didn´t have much knowledge, were still ones that would take him time to do. That was the method for those magic words that could shut the talkative Karl to be set up. Doing this might end up becoming a problem if Willian was to overuse it though…

“Who is the one that will be organizing the party?”

Because Willian thought it was a bit too pitiful for Karl, he brought up a topic to talk about. At that instant, Karl´s face brightened in happiness.

“Hmm, I believe it is the general Baldias. It seems like there were many people that received medals and promotions, so there will be many people related to the military. But because there will be very terrifying nobles, I am kind of nervous.”

The unmoveable Baldias. He was the ultimate knight; the one Arcadia was the most proud of. The way his name would thunder through the nations was one of the things that Willian aimed for. Of course, he didn´t intend on getting satisfied with only that.

“”The problem is the nature of the nobles. It is obvious their family ties aren´t firm. There is something there. That said, I don´t have enough knowledge about this world to be able to guess what it is.””(TL note: Not sure about the first part of this line ->問題は貴族の質。明らかに身内を固めたとかそういうものじゃない。<-)

Regardless of that, Karl´s promotion to centurion was something that has been already decided. It was possible to be certain of that from the time Karl was invited to the party. It was just how many military achievements he raised. It is rare to see in the history for a ten-man squad to raise such achievements.

“”That said, neither I nor Karl have the power to eat up people of that level. The one to receive spotlight here is someone else. We are at most just extras.””

Even if they were only extras, once Karl was to become a centurion, the extension of their military tatics would widen immensely. To Willian, who felt that he was being limited by being on a ten-man squad, that moment was something he anticipated.

“For now, let´s carry on calmly and without carelessness.”

“….These last few days Willian has been so much untalkative.”

The carriage was transporting the two of them. They were going to Baldias´s mansion, which was at the inner part of the noble district.

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Luxurious and gorgeous. It was a mansion that could be described by those words. Baldias apparently was someone that didn´t like gaudy decorations himself, but his position wouldn´t let him do as he pleased. The gaudiness of the inner part of the mansion wasn´t something one could casually have in their home.

“It´s really amazing how big this place is for how it can easily accommodate this many people.”

“Yes, as to be expected, you must have a house of this level in a place like this. Even if you had the money, you wouldn´t be able to buy the land. There is the eyes of people surrounding you after all.”

The land of the noble district was bound by unique rules. At the underworld, as long as you had the money to pay for it, you could have anything granted. However, at this place, there was something called status that would come in need. In contrast, if you had status, even if you didn´t desire for it, you would need to live in a residence of those standards. The noble district was a place where status had the priority over money. Perhaps it was because of that that Lord Teirah was racking his brains to solve this problem.

“…Who is that masked man?”

“You see, it is that Teirah family´s…”

“Yes, that jumped-up…”

From their surroundings, eyes filled with wonderment were looking at the two that obviously didn´t have enough status to be there. Even Karl, who was supposed to be a noble, was being treated like that. As for Willian, his treatment was lower than that of a worthless nobody.

“You came with your mask on?”

“Yes. I am here as Karl´s shadow. Besides, there is no way the [White Mask] would just remove his mask.”

Together with Willian´s military fame, his nickname [White Mask] also spread. It was only limited to the countries neighboring Arcadia, but there were signs it was spreading little by little. This time, Willian had been invited as a soldier, and so wearing his mask was in fact part of his courtesy.

Of course his true intention was to have the mask make him stand out. Hence, in this place where standing out was next to impossible, it was a very convenient item.

“Karl, it really seems you are doing good, doesn´t it?”

Karl received a fright. His expression wasn´t really one of happiness. Rather, it looked to be one of dread. For the time being, Willian decided to observe what was going to happen. He was leaving him by himself.

“Karl´s invincible ten-man squad; is that how they call it? Isn´t this amazing?”

A female came over next to Karl and embraced his neck.

“That all sickly Karl is so lively now.”

“N-no, compared to Hilda, I am nothing…”

“Compared to Hilda? Since when did I become something that you can just compare to?

In the end, it is Karl-chan´s bad habit to get all cocky."

Raising her eyes, the woman called Hilda looked at Willian.

"Or could it be that you are all happy after finding your so excellent sword? Hm?"

There wasn´t the slightest warmth in her eyes. Rather, it was killing intent that overflowed from it. Wind gushed out from her body. Like a windstorm, it hit Willian´s whole body. It carried a distinct killing intent.

""This guy too… can use it?""

Willian evaluated his opponent. The wind-like aura gushing out from her whole body was her peculiarity. Seeing that he couldn´t feel malicious intents coming from her, she should be a good person. However, the hostility being brought against Willian wasn´t something average.

"Hahan, so you can see it too. My name is Hilda Von Gardener. Dame Hirda you may call. That´s quite the good mask, handsome."

Dame. In order words, it was a woman that received the title of a knight. The knight positions in Arcadia weren´t passed down by heritage. They were titles that could only be obtained by making achievements in the battlefield. It was because of that that the nobility desired it. It was because that would become a symbol for what they achieved in the battlefield.

"It is an honor to receive your praise, Dame Hilda. My name is Willian Rivius. I am pleased to make your acquaintance."

Even without her knight title, Willian could see that she wasn´t average. And besides

that…

“I am eagerly waiting for the day we can fight on the battlefield side-by-side.”

Willian was also someone abnormal. The stench of corpses followed him to the point of it being lightly fragrant. Hilda´s eyebrows moved in surprise.

“Heh, the disparity between you and Karl is more and more.” (TL note: Weird to translate -.- She is talking about her point of view, with she becoming more and more aware of the amount of the disparity. Since the way she says in the raw is also really ambiguous, I guess it is accurate? ‘ 3’)

Throwing Karl aside, she approached Willian. Hilda´s eyes were set on Willian. She had just been trifling around with Karl.

“I don´t care what happens to this sickly, to his old brother or to that suspicious-looking old man, but if something happens to Lutogarde, I will be killing you, so best regards.”

After saying that, Hilda left them. The two were left with surprised faces.

“…Is she Lutogarde-sama´s acquaintance?”

“No, I guess… she is her best friend? Like you saw before, Lutogarde doesn´t have many friends. Among the few she has, Hilda is the only one that still hangs out with her. But Hilda is busy, and there is also her family lineage, so it is not like they meet often.”

Hilda´s family lineage. Even though Willian got a little bit caught up into all that, he decided that he didn´t need to inquire about that in particular. In brief, being the daughter of a marquis, the Teirah household couldn´t match Hilda.

“”From what I saw, she has a lot of acquaintances and is very sociable…. I can´t imagine she being friends with Lutogarde.””

Many people surrounded Hilda, coming to greet her. Most of those people were Hilda´s acquaintances. Could those be her connections? The familiarity she showed them was transparent.

“Hilda is a primi ordines. She is the most successful centurion among the young ones. You see, those people that are talking to Hilda right now are other centurions from her same generation. All of them came from the same school. …I dropped out from it though, ehehe…” (TL note: Primi ordines is basically a high-ranked centurion. Just google it if you want to know more -.-)

The people that were talking to Hilda indeed had a different air to them. While they had the airs of nobility, they still smelled like the battlefield. Among them, there were ones that had a considerable aura around them.

“You are being too humble. Even without the school or something else of the sort, won´t you be catching up with them today?”

“Eh? What do you mean by saying catchin…?”

At the same instant Karl said that, the place became silent. At the second floor of the saloon, the organizer of today´s party, Baldias had showed up at a place he stood out. His presence didn´t lose to the gaudily decorated mansion. That was what nobility was; that was what a general was. It made everyone swallow a mouthful of saliva.

“”I see, as expected of the unmovable Baldias. He is quite up to his standing.””

Before, Willian was worried about how he would react if he was to be hit by his aura, but for some strange reason, he was very calm. Having the mask and having met Strakules had been both very consequential for him right now.

“I am sincerely grateful for all of you to have come to my humble home. Although modest, I have prepared you food and beverages. However, before that, I would like to hold the nomination ceremony. If possible, I would like you to stand up.”

Including the ones that were sitting before, everyone was standing. With that said, there weren´t many people that were sitting at that time.

“Today, as the organizer of this party, I was supposed to be the host of the ceremony we will be holding. However, due to last-minute circumstances, the host has changed. I will be entrusting the nomination ceremony to this person. Everyone, please, give a round of applauses.”

Troubled about what to do, the applauses given were sparse between the people. Some were clapping with all their energy. In particular, it were those that had so high status to the point the standards of the place didn´t match theirs.

“”Why? Is something coming?””

The answer to Willian´s confusion was….

“Your Highness Eahart Von Arcadia

“Hahaha, like always, you are really bad at giving introductions of this sort, Baldias.”

The one that appeared was a monster enveloped by a golden aura.

“Ha?”

At that instant, Willian´s consciousness was blown away. He couldn´t properly be conscious of that person whose eyes shined in gold. That person had this much amount of power. His aura and everything else was different.

“I-it´s the second prince. Th-this is the first time I´ve seen him.”

Karl´s legs were trembling. It was as if the god up in the skies had descended. It wasn´t impossible to compare the prince to that.

“Your invitation for today´s party is more than I deserve, your Excellency, the unmovable Baldias.”

“I would like to ask your Highness not to bully the aged. Now then, I will be leaving it to you, your Highness.”

Eahart was now standing at the place Baldias stood before. Eahart´s presence was so incredible to the point of one being able to believe that the place he was standing at was the center of the world.

“Everyone, I believe some of you are seeing me for their first time. I will immediately introduce myself to you. My name is Eahart Von Arcadia. It is an honor to have made your acquaintance.”

Despite of how the prince was depreciating himself and humbly introducing himself, it was difficult to give a response to him. All the people were petrified, thinking on how were they supposed to react to that. Eahart was bitterly smiling in a bored manner.

“I am sorry. As I am nothing but the second prince, for such complicated standing, there was no way I could act prideful to all of you. I cannot become the king because of my elder brother after all.”

An explosive declaration. Out of all things the second prince could say in that place, it was something related to the crown. That was enough for it to be a great incident. The shock coming from the stage was so strong it made everyone paralysed.

“Your Highness, please, stop playing around.”

Baldias spoke. With those words, Eahart showed a playful smile.

“Now then, let´s immediately begin the ceremony. First, I would like to say that everyone has been working for the sake of Arcadia very well. In our last war at Raconia, we have been vigorously piling up victory after victory. All this was due to everyone´s support. This evening, we´ve prepared as many satisfactory promotions, medals and special rewards as possible to us. We cannot blunder the following feast after all.” (TL note: I guess “blundering” the feast would be about someone receiving an unsatisfactory reward and being all down. I´m not sure though because the context isn´t really specified -.- ->今宵は出来るだけ多くのものが満足いくよう昇進や叙勲、特別報酬を用意したつもりだ。この後の会食に水を差すわけにもいかないからね<-)

As if he was already used to the prince treatment, Eahart was showing a small smile.

“Now then, we will be starting the. First…”

From a position that was higher than the military, the promotions and medals were being told.

Regarding that, Willian was frowning his face under the mask.

“”My power and knowledge is above them. Despite that, there was that much of a difference between them and me. Those are people that stood on the top of the skies since birth. ….This really shakes the heart.””

After people died, they would become the same. Willian believed that. Because all of them were people that would similarly be taken by death, then it didn´t matter who was above or below. It didn´t matter who was nobility and who was the slave. He believed that.

However, whether that was really the truth, and whether death was truly equal despite how there was so much difference at birth, then where was the reason proving why only death was equal? Willian didn´t know whether the paths they would go would differ after they died, or if a monster like that could really die to begin with. He didn´t know any of it. He started to feel like he didn´t want to know.

“”Eahart Von Arcadia.””

That was the second prince. Then, how much distant was the first prince, not to say the king.

Suddenly, Willian´s and Eahart´s eyes met. It happened so quick that it wasn´t clear whether their eyes really met, but Willian knew of one thing. He knew about the distance between them. Willian used to believe the speed he walked was fast. He used to think his growth speed was fast enough. However…

“”It´s not enough. Not enough at all. With that pace, how am I supposed to catch up with those guys!?””

He was fed up with his own naivete. He needed to run up faster, and much higher.

“”Heh, so that´s the rumored white mask?””

In the same way, Eahart also noticed the abnormality within Willian. To him, Willian was just a very small existence. He could easily be blown away. That was the position Willian was standing at. However, that small existence was struggling. Eahart could see it was desperately extending its hands to heavens.

To Eahart, this was so unbearingly humorous, but so much that…

“”Isn´t he nice? That guy.””

…That it got his interest.

Willian and Eahart. Heavens and earth had for the first time met. At that time, nobody knew whether it was heavens that would crush earth, or if it was earth that would eat heavens.

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Knighthood and citizenship

“Hilda von Gardener. Step forward.”

“Yes!”

Finally the turn of the young aspirants came. Soon it would be Karl´s turn. Willian was looking at Karl, who was beside him. Because had his hands full just on himself, he hasn´t been paying attention to Karl. But then, just to be sure, Willian….

“…”

Karl was frozen stiff. Despite seeing that, Willian let out a smile instead.

“…I guess it will be difficult even if I was to tell him to calm down.”

As he was trembling, Karl turned his eyes to Willian.

“Wh-wh-what should I do. I-If I do any mistake in front of his Highness, my family will…”

Destruction would befall the Teirah family. It was obvious. This was the place Karl and his family were standing at. This was the feeling of tension of not knowing which words would inquire the anger of the monster that supported a kingdom in its back. It was more unreasonable to tell him not to feel pressured.

If there was the chance that the people Willian cared for were to get involved with that problem, he also wouldn´t be able to stay calm like he was now. Family was something distant in the past; him being by himself was the reason for his carefreeness. Perhaps in

a certain sense this could be considered not being restrained by that heavy pressure.

Hence, Willian thought it should be fine if he was to lend his shoulder to Karl for just a little bit.

“That´s right… If you fail…”

With words of failure being spoken, Karl´s tension increased.

Hilda, who had received a special reward, was glancing at Karl´s direction with a worried face. If Karl was to fail, Lutogarde would also suffer for that. Perhaps it was because of that that she was being worried, or then, it was the pity of seeing an acquaintance suffering. If not, then perhaps…

“If you fail… then let us crumble together.”

“Bh!?”(ブヒォ！？)

Karl spat out in a weird manner. Fortunately, because the two were in a far away place, nobody heard it. Of course, something of this sort is to be taken into consideration. (TL note: Like when you spit what you are drinking when people get surprised at TV shows and so. I really just can´t find a verb for that anywhere -.-)

“I will take the prince as a hostage and have negotiations with the king. Then, we would seek asylum in Ostoberg or Garius or some other kingdom. While it would be a long travel, it would also be interesting if we were to go to the distant Arkland. How is it? Doesn´t it make you excited?”

Willian was saying absurd things. Even Karl knew all that were just dreams.

“This is not the time to be saying jokes.”

One after another the young aspirants were being called. It wouldn´t be weird if Karl was to be called next now.

“I´m not saying this as a joke. If you make any mistakes there, all I have to do is to simply do that. I have already visualized how it would happen. I will protect Louran-sama, Aianhart-sama and Lutogarde-sama too. From the beginning, since that time, I became your sword. I am not serving Arcadia; I am serving Karl von Teirah.”

In the inside, Willian was filled with lies. Willian felt a bit uneasy on how he was able to tell all that so smoothly. It was because of how it felt as if he was telling the truth that…

“Am I unworthy of it?”

Willian looked at Karl´s eyes. The eyes tell as much as the mouth. And that was why…

“You aren´t, you are good enough!”

Karl´s trembling stopped. It´s body that was stiffened had some of its limpness returned.

“Karl von Teirah, step forward.”

Karl´s turn came at last. Before, it wouldn´t have been weird if Karl had fainted at that moment. However, right now…

“Yes!”

He stuffed his chest with pride and walked forward.

“Be calm. I will be following behind you.”

“Yes!”

Karl advanced forward. Willian was the sword that protected Karl´s back. A sword of such loyalty that approached the extents of absolute sincerity. Karl didn´t have any doubts on such absoluteness. Because of that, Karl walked forward filled with confidence.

“Hou, so that´s the one of the Teirahs.”

The surrounding eyes slightly changed seeing his imposing standing figure.

“Karl, you…”

Hilda too showed surprise at the change Karl, who she knew since they were little, had.

“”Willian is together with me. He told me that. In that case, all I need to do is to believe.””

Without hesitations, his sight was directed to heavens. He looked at Eahart von Arcadia.

“”To me, Willian… is even higher than his Highness.””

Wind blew. Although for only an instant, there was no mistake. It was only a breeze, but it definitely happened.

“…Karl?”

This was the growth that not even Willian…. No, it was because it was Willian, who had been together with Karl all this time, that he had never expected: the growth of Karl von Teirah. It wasn´t just Willian to have come to that realization.

Karl got down on his knees and bowed his head down. His conduct was what was expected of a noble; it was refined.

“Ten-man leader Karl, the rumours about you have reached even my ears. Your military results were incredible. In the whole history of Arcadia, there hasn´t been any ten-man squad that has made as much excellent achievements as you. Therefore….”

Eahart took out the sword in his waist.

The place became in uproar. Cold sweat ran through Karl´s back as he wondered if he had committed any mistake. That was an instant of tension for Willian, who was watching that scene. If what he thought it was going to unfold happened to be the case, he would need to make his move.

“Karl von Teirah will be promoted from a ten-man squad leader to a hundred-man commander. In addition, I will grant Karl von Teirah the title of knight!”

The place was in clamor. There were many that expressed their surprise with loud voices. Karl himself was also surprised. He was desperately making all his efforts to not

let that feeling out of his mouth. However, sweat only increased on his back. What happened was something out of expectations for Willian. A ten-man squad captain receiving the title of knight was something unheard of. Moreover, among the nobles, Karl was only an emerging low-class noble family that didn´t even have any connections. What just happened was impossible.

"Do you swear you will become a sword for the kingdom?"

The sword was softly put onto his shoulder. An impossible occurrence was happening.

"I swear on my sword."

Eahart smiled when he heard that answer. He sheathed his sword and went back.

"Karl von Teirah, you may go now."

"Ha!"

It happened for only a short time, but to Karl, it was like eternity. He had resolved himself and walked forward, but he couldn´t have expected that what awaited him was such an overwhelming thing.

"Th-this is bad Willian. I can´t breath…"

"You´ve done well. Even I was surprised. Who would have thought you would become a knight. And not only that, but even someone of the royalty was present."

With his arms. Willian supported Karl, who had his strings cut by all his tension, and

started to think.

He started to think about the reason why someone from the royalty was present in the party. The reason was simple. Let aside knight titles, even giving nobility titles was limited to the royalty. Karl received the title of knight, and therefore, someone of the royalty went his way to come here for the sake of granting it to him.

“At last… Willian Rivius, step forward.”

“Eh?”

Before, the place was all boiling with excitement with Karl´s entitlement to knight. That same place immediately became silent.

Karl was surprised. Once again, for Willian to be called was something that was the most unexpected out of the things that were outside of expectations. It may be possible for people being nominated centurions to be called, but it was impossible for people being nominated a ten-man squad leader to be called there. In that case, why in the world was Willian called?

“Willian Rivius.”

“Ha!”

For the moment, Willian had to walk forward. Moving Karl out of the way, he stepped forward. The voices of the many people gossiping about things such as “That guy is a foreigner, isn´t he?” “He isn´t even a ten-man captain yet” “Why is the white mask being called for?” “Could it be he got his Highness displeasure?” reached Willian´s ears.

Willian arrived in front of the stairs. He turned his eyes to heavens. The golden monster

was right in front of him.

“”He seems tasty.”

Drool overflowed his mouth. He slurped it back. With his tongue, he hurriedly held back the saliva that was about to drip out of his mouth. Willian started feeling like laughing. Having to step forward to such place and getting into a situation he knew nothing of what was about to happen, Willian enviously desired the man in front of his eyes. He desired to steal from him from the depths of his heart. He wanted that light. If he stole it from him, his thirst, his hunger would definitely be satiated.

“Now then, first I would like to apology for having suddenly called you. This might sound like an awkward question, but…. Could it be you are an ugly person?”

Eahart suddenly asked Willian something unimaginable.

“I cannot decide for myself whether I am ugly or not, but I have confidence my appearance is fine for exposure to the public.”

Willian laughed under his mask satisfied. This was a question about his mask. In that case, many answers could be thought about. If Willian had been brought here only for the sake of this question, then this was something that he could be thankful about. This place was somewhere that made him stand out very well.

“Then, do you wear this mask for some reason?”

Just like Willian had thought.

“This is a tool to separate my warrior self from my normal self. At the battlefield, there are times I start feeling a deep killing intent. At those times, due to my mask interposing

between the two, I can have composedly make objective decisions."

"Is that the motive behind Karl´s ten-man squad success?"

"All achievements were accomplished by Karl-sama´s strength, of course. My strength is nothing but negligible. Moreover, if your Highness were now to ask whether this mask is important to me, the answer would be yes, your Highness."

Willian kept his head bowed. Eahart looked at him from above.

"Fufu, I won´t make such inelegant action such as taking the mask away from the white mask. All I wanted is to ask about it. Now then, to the main point at hand."

It seems Eahart didn´t call Willian here to chit-chat. He called him with a motive. Something must have happened.

"I´ve heard a lot about your achievements. You´ve taken down the high-ranked centurion Haian at Raconia. At Tayar, you´ve also taken the high-ranked centurion Urkeus. A few days ago, you´ve even taken down the [Polar Bear] of the small northern country of Ratolukia, the centurion Shulvester Niklainen."

The people that had military connections to Baldias´ troops became open-eyed at that information. Hilda and the other youngsters were also open-eyed in surprise.

Shulvester Niklainen, the [Polar Bear], was an old experienced centurion that boasted of his tremendous popularity with the populace. He left his name in history when he battled Baldias at the days Baldias was still a centurion. Because he was a commoner, he couldn´t be promoted higher than that, and much more now that he became old, he had been battling in the frontlines of Ratolukia. Willian had killed this caliber of a man.

“”Rumours travel fast. I thought this time it wouldn´t be included in the investigations.””

Willian having killed Shulvester was really recent. Recent to the point that even Baldias wouldn´t have been able to know about it. For Eahart to have caught such information so fast, it could be seen he wasn´t a simple royalty. But even so, there should be a reason for that…

“Of course, your achievements until now have been incredible. However, it is not enough to call your achievement of having killed the [Polar Bear] just incredible. Do you know why is that?”

The battle against Shulvester has indeed been heroic. Even with how Willian was now, he had been considerably puzzled when making his decisions. Because Shurvester himself was old, he had lost his edge. Not only that, Willian barely defeated him.

Cooperating with the centurion responsible of the front, they had encircled Shulvester, and when he was about to forcefully break out of the encirclement, Willian attacked. Despite how Shulvester was supposed to be all weakened and full of wounds, he was much more powerful than before. After Willian and that monster having clashed their swords many times, Willian was finally able to kill him.

For having killed such monster, it wasn´t weird that Willian was receiving that extend of praises. It wasn´t weird, but in the end, it was the leader who received the price; the centurion. Besides, his golden days of fame had passed long ago. He didn´t think he would get something special from having done that. In the end, it would be considered as if he killed nothing more than just some simple soldier…

“Ratolukia, you know, has surrendered to Arcadia. That was something I´ve heard last night though.”

Willian was still with his head down. Karl looked at Willian. It wasn´t only Hilda and the other youngsters, but rather, all people in the whole place were open-mouthed. This

was how much it was a shock to them.

“Originally, that country didn´t have resources left. They were in a condition which their land was becoming barren and infertile, and they were starting to stray from the image of what a nation is supposed to be. It was only a question of time until they crumbled. However, this last push was the defeat of the hero [Polar Bear]. It was the victory of Karl´s undefeatable ten-man squad and the centurion responsible for that. I thought not giving anything for the one responsible of bringing down a whole country was something improper as to be expected. That was why I have come here.”

While there was the reason of giving Karl the knight title, this was the main reason. Willian was finally able to understand. He also understood the reason why Baldias didn´t know about it, and only Eahart knew of that. Matters about a country crossed over the jurisdiction of the military; that was the territory of the government. Eahart took his information from there.

“However, you are still not even a ten-man squad leader. Even considering your achievements, this is still a fact. While I believe saying this makes it too small of an evaluation of you, it is difficult for me to promote you in one go. Besides, Karl-kun is from noble descendancy while you are a foreigner. Giving you the title of knight so suddenly is difficult.”

Eahart drew his sword.

“Therefore, I will grant Willian Rivius the status of a second class citizen. Of course, with the condition you will continue to work for the sake of our kingdom as a ten-man squad leader.”

Even if one was to marry someone, while the born child would be a second class citizen, the person himself, who was a third class citizen, wouldn´t have his social position changed. This was the exceptions among exceptions. Perhaps for Karl and the other nobles it didn´t feel like that big of a deal, but to Willian, he could only feel surprised.

He believed that he could get detached from his third class citizen status by becoming a noble. This was a very narrow path. Willian believed those were matters that were still distant in the future.

“Do you swear on becoming a citizen of our nation?”

It wasn´t like anything would change if he was to be recognized as a citizen. It wasn´t like his privileges would increase, and his standing and merit simply became that of a [normal citizen], which was so distant from him before.

“I swear. I swear on my life.”

However, Willian was showing a smile on his face. He had finally went up a step that was actually definite. It wasn´t like Willian wanted to rise in the military. At most, the military was just a tool for him to step onto. This was the only method.

“Willian Rivius, you may go now.”

His objective was to rise in power in this country. It was to eat up all the people that would scorn at him as if he was lower than worms. The has finally decided the reason behind this goal [now].

“Ha.”

It was possible for the king to give position to people. This power was one similar to the one of god. Something like that was only possible after standing over ten thousand people. In that case, all he aimed for was only one thing.

The top of people. In other words, [king].

Willian turned around and saw the scene that had been unfolding behind him. Nobility, nobility, nobility; the bunch that were chosen. Willian once again realized that this was still half-way. He realised that he was still at the bottommost position, and that his origins were the lowest. It was because of that that all this had meaning.

“”くひっ”” (TL note: Onomatopoeia? .-. I have no idea ‘ 3’)

It would be interesting if a lower class was to eat up all this. It would suffice as a comedy show, truly.

“”I will eat all of them. But that after I am done eating the ones at the back.””

Under the white mask, a beast of greed quietly boiled.

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The young lion cuds of Arcadia

The promotion ceremony ended and the hall was turned into a buffet. There was wine made with high-class grapes, toasted bread, fresh meat and vegetables, and there was even high-quality fish dishes even though Arcadia didn´t have access to the sea. All people separated themselves into many groups and would eat, drink and engage on interesting conversations. The groups were composed by people that had a corresponding standing to the place. And so…

“There is nothing to do.”

“Yes.”

Willian and Karl didn´t have anything to do. To silently keep eating would give a shabby impression, and they didn´t know what to talk about either. Karl didn´t have enough status to mingle with other groups, and Willian was at most nothing more than a second-class citizen.

“”However, there are people that are giving glances at us. Whether it is for vigilance, interest, or some kind of expectation.””

Willian was aware that sometimes eyes would be gathered at them. Let alone Karl, who was granted the title of knight, it was Willian, who received the title of second-class citizen, which was something unprecedented in history. Once Willian got better status after raising a few more achievements, it would be him the leading actor in this place. Today wasn´t that day. That´s all there was to it.

“”There is no need to be flustered. There is the need to hurry up though.””

He would raise military achievements. Now that the Karl´s ten-man squad became Karl ´s hundred-man squad, the variety of strategies that could be employed increased. The

influence they could have on the battlefield was something that couldn´t be compared to the time they were still a ten-man squad. The amount of achievements would increase too.

“Karl, whity, can you come here for a moment?”

“Eh, Hilda?”

Hilda, who had been talking to a crowd of people before, came to where Karl and Willian were standing isolated. There were some people waiting at the place Hilda was pointing at. Karl caught his breath. Even though he made a face of not wanting to go, he was dragged by the ears.

““I see, it is the nobles´ little young masters.””

It was the graduates of the school Karl couldn´t get in. They were sons of nobles that swiftly made it through the elite course, and probably had already been given positions as centurions from the beginning. And also…

““Comparatively, they are pretty good.””

From what Willian could see, the people Hilda was introducing them to had probably been gems she sorted out from the lump of raw ore in the past. They should be people that Hilda could put her trust at to a certain extent. Their aura were also reasonably good.

“Well, since he stood out before, you should know, but this feeble guy is Karl. The white one is Willian.”

Hilda gave a vague introduction. Hilda didn´t know about Willian to the point she could

introduce him to begin with, and it probably wasn´t necessary to tell them about Karl either. But even so, two of the people were looking at them with their interest deepening, though one didn´t even look at their eyes.

"I am the centurion Anzerm Von Krulgar. Please take care of me may we meet in the battlefield."

The black haired and blue eyed Anzerm. He was the eldest son of the household of Krugar and possessed the title of knight. His father was a marquis, and by the Arcadian law, he automatically had the right to the title of viscount. Noticeably embezzling his title of viscount, he had the evidence of his merit in the battlefield by having the title of a knight. His well-shaped body and his virile face would tell he had gone through many experiences.

"My name is Gregour Von Tundar. Because of the sudden death of my father, I currently have the position of count. Nice to meet you!"

Although it was inferior to the household of Krulgar, bulky Gregour had come from a distinguished family. Because of his father´s sudden death, he immediately succeeded his title of count. Swinging his huge weapon by using his big physique at the battlefield, he trampled down many soldiers. Although he didn´t name himself as such, he was a centurion.

"I don´t feel the need to name myself to those people. I beg your pardon, Hilda."

The man that didn´t name himself left without looking at neither Karl´s nor Willian´s face even once. Hilda sighed. Karl breathed out in relief.

"Sorry there, Karl. He had been that kind of guy since way back then."

Gregour placed his arm at Karl´s shoulders in a friendly manner. Karl was shrinking away.

“His name is Gilberto Von Osvalt. His family is at the title of duke. I guess he is probably the one with highest standing here in terms of family prestige if you take out the prince? He is a disagreeable guy, but… he is very strong.”

Hilda looked at Willian and explained. Willian expressed his gratitude by saying “thank you very much”, but this was still something that was clear just by looking at. His aura was different. Well, the same could be said to the three people at the place.

“Is Lutogarde doing well? Let me meet her this time.”

The instant Gregour said that, Hilda gushed forward a huge amount of killing intent. Although Gregour evaded the topic, saying “It´s just a joke, just a joke”, Hilda kept glaring at him.

“”What a weird guy. Is that plain girl really any good?”” (TL note: Noooo Lutogardeee ;-;)

Willian didn´t know any good points about her at all, and there also weren´t many men that Lutogarde was able to properly have a conversation with. It might have indeed been a joke just like the person himself had said…

“I had fought against Haian once. I´ve wanted to meet you, who killed him.”

Anzerm extended his hand for a handshake. He had strength, and also seemed to the the type that would handle people without favoritism. That is, if the other party had strength.

“Please take care of me, Anzerm-dono.”

Anzerm´s fighting prowess could be felt by the grip on his hand. Probably it was the same for Anzerm from Willian.

“Although Anzerm is a viscount, he hates being called in that way. If you are going to use honorifics, you should use the “sir” used for the title of knight, white mask.”

Now it was Gregour that extended his hand. Willian could feel the same amount of power he could see from his appearance.

“So, you were the one that defeated that Shulvester Niklainen? No, it is not that I am glorifying you, [White Mask]. The legends about that person spread not only to the bordering Arcadia, but also to distant countries. He was indeed a living legend. If this had been when you would had already become a ten-man squad leader, you would have got a set promotion of centurion and the title of knight without any problems…. Such a shame!”

Gregour praised Willian´s military exploits of having killed Shulvester. However, his eyes weren´t smiling. Rather, a faint jealousy of having taken down the legend could be seen. This was probably the same thought Hilda and all the people from the military that were present at the party had as well.

To be lucky and have killed a legend after it had grown old.

“I would like to hear how you took him down for future references.”

Although Anzerm´s expression didn´t change, he was overflowing with interest.

“Then I may overstep the bounds a little. First, I had cooperated with the local centurion. And then, we planned to surround the….”

If this was so he could deepen his bounds with centurions that were truly strong, doing this was nothing. If he was to do large-scale strategies in the battles from now on, coordinating would be essential. Telling the general idea of the plan as it being something Karl had thought, Willian continued his story.

Looking like Hilda got bored out, she was using Karl to play around. It was Karl´s game of pulling his cheeks around. This was one of the reasons why Karl was bad at dealing with Hilda since his childhood.

“That´s bad.”

“たてたてよこよこまーるかいてちょん！” (TL note: Hilda is saying that while pulling Karl´s cheeks Romaji: Tate tate yoko yoko maru kaite chon. A rough translation would be something like: Up down, up down, left right, left right, draw a circle, chon. (Dunno what chon is -.-) This would be the directions the person is pulling the cheeks. Looks like this is used as “punishment” for games that have that. -> “Batsu geemu”)

“It hurds!?”

Despite all, this was still an exchange between two centurions.

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The ones that watch over from the top

"Baldias, would it be there the people that had good prospects are gathered at?"

Eahart was looking at one group in the buffet party happening at the lower floor. The young centurions were talking to each other. Away from them were many other groups, but they didn´t give off auras that were as thick as the aura being given off from that one group. Eahart picked people by their auras. Their goodness and wickedness would appear in their appearance. One´s aura was individual; it was like a meter that would show one´s characteristics. Whichever field may the person be good at, as long as the person has talent, it would naturally be retained in the aura.

"That´s right. But I didn´t think Karl von Teirah would be together with them."

The blonde blue eyed young man. He was still young in terms of age, but his figure made him seem childish. At first glance, he didn´t give off any aura. In Eahart´s view, that person was someone he wouldn´t think of appointing to an important position.

"He is that man´s front cover. The excellent one is the masked. He is very good; I really want him."

Slurp*

Eahart was drooling. Eahart was a collector of talented people. It would be no problems for him to get capable pawns no matter how many he wanted. What would shine the most was the talented. Eahart was fond of that shine.

"Why did you have to call me for such worthless gathering."

Behind Eahart was an peerlessly beautiful woman who elegantly relaxed and felt at her own home as maid servants washed her feet and fanned her with a traditional fan.

“Don´t say that Claudia. Isn´t their resume reasonably good?”

“They don´t have enough prestige. Not enough to see me.”

To Eahart, it was exciting for him to have so many talented people gathered together, but for the woman called Claudia, they didn´t have enough status. To her, there was nothing to be seen there.

“This is the first time I have seen so many people together, ani-sama.”

In contrast to Claudia, there was a girl that looked at the lower floor with interest. The girl was also an unparalleled beauty. If Claudia was bewitching, the girl would be sweet. It was a type of charm that went into another direction. Of course, both were still beauties to the point that if there were a hundred man, all the hundred of the men would ask them for marriage. It was beautifulness they had since they were born.

“That´s right, Eleonora. Hey Claudia, you come over too.”

Claudia was feeling annoyed from the depths of her heart. Eleonora was excited and full interest. Because this was the first time she left the royal palace, all she would see and hear would be new.

Both of them were the princesses that held the surname of Arcadia. The first princess was Claudia, and the second was Eleonora. They had royal blood and held a status that was different to the common crowds.

“Oh, this is a face I have seen before.”

“He is from the Osvalt family, your Highness.”

It was a face that drew Claudia´s attention and which she had seen before. In other words, except for the royalty that was present at the place, that person was the one with the highest standing. It was Gilberto, whose family held the title of duke.

“He is reasonably skillful and has also raised military achievements. He is a prodigy that will one day carry the kingdom on his back.”

“Hmph, but he is the second son, isn´t he? If so, he doesn´t have the standing to meet me.”

Even though he would still get a good share of power from his family, he didn´t pose as worthy to Claudia´s eyes. She didn´t have any consideration for the others either. Claudia believed their lack of status was too much.

“The one that defeated that polar bear is him?”

Eleonora asked Baldias. Baldias nodded. As soon as he did, she put on a cheerful expression. The battle between Baldias and Shulvester that happened at their young age was one that became a legend in both countries. They had many times met their blades at the northern plains that were filled with snow. Sometimes he would win, sometimes he would lose. Those numerous tales originated from there. There was no way the man that ended this legend wouldn´t excite the interest of this story-loving girl.

“But I´ve heard Shulvester grew very old though?”

As to be expected, Eahart was composed. To him, strength had priority over established reputation. While Shulvester was a legend at his period, by now he was just an old man.

There was still a great gap until Willian could reach the likes of Baldias, the cornerstone of the military.

“Although old, that man is strong. The only ones present here that are capable of bringing him down is me and that brat; only us. Although I had faced him head-on, brat probably plotted a plan against him… Besides, it should be a plan so childish to the point it makes me up in arms.”

Baldias was grinding his teeth. The general Baldias was strong to the point his strength could be seen just by looking at him. He became far stronger than he used to be, but even so, he wasn´t strong enough to the point of do as he wished when moving head-on against Shulvester. Even if he had plotted a plan, it wouldn´t have made enough difference to the point he would have been able easily surround him.

“That´s right. The local hundred-man squad was pretty much annihilated at that time. It was because of that that centurion wasn´t invited.”

The devastated hundred-man squad. They were probably used to their skin of their bone for Willian´s plan. There were many arrow wounds and contusions made by throwing stones in Shulvester´s body that had been recovered. To begin with, his army had been cut off from the supply line, so his body was considerably thin due to the lack of food. He wasn´t fighting at his best.

“But it´s Ratolukia´s fault. They stationed such a legend at that little garrison after all. It was as if they were telling us to kill him…. Well, but it is on us for how he hadn´t been killed until now.”

The humane characteristic in the plan; though the lack of respect for a legend, it is an fact he killed Shulvester. The old soldier that kept leisurely holding back Arcadia´s invasions wasn´t there anymore. With that, peace came to the north. The little country that had been difficult to deal with was no more. (TL note: 策の人道性= humane characteristic in the plan? Weird line to translate -.- The meaning should be something along those lines though. ‘ 3’)

“Well, he is talented. A type of talent I cannot stand however.”

Willian could be seen as crooked for someone of the military. This was something Baldias couldn´t stand no matter how.

“A man that is only skilled is boring. A man has to be wise.”

The parts that Baldias couldn´t stand became the parts that were valued for Eahart. In the end, Eahart became interestested in Willian; interested in such ambitious man that aimed for the sky, going beyond means or position.

“Now then, I am tired of eating. Let´s have some after-meal exercise, shall we?”

Eahart stood up. The party had only just begun.

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The foe before his eyes

The hall was becoming livened up. The crowd began to dance in the tone of the musical performance of the orchestra playing at the back.

The cheeks of the noble ladies redenned for Eahart after he had gone downstairs. The beauty of the two princesses that had finally gone down to the hall made the men in the crowd catch their breaths. Eahart and Claudia started to dance. Baldias and Eleonora were casually dancing as well.

“Alright, let´s go dance to our heart’s content!”(TL note: Not sure how to translate this line properly ->さー、カールガンガン踊るわよ！<-)

“N-no. I am bad at dancing.”

Karl was once again being dragged around. Willian made a wry smile as he looked at it. Gregour and Anzerm were also dancing with other ladies. The finesse of their dance was what it could be expected of nobleman. Even if Willian was to go dance himself, he wouldn´t be able to have the same elegance.

“”This will come to be necessary though.””

Willian still hasn´t been invited to dance. He didn´t have the status nor the technique to be invited either. All he could do was to quietly watch.

“You suck!”

“Sorrwy!”

He had the confidence he would do better than Karl, who was stepping onto Hilda´s feet all the time, though…

"…But good graciousness, count has a really good taste for alcohol."

"What, there is nobody that can be compared to viscount-dono in regards of that."

Suddenly, that conversation entered Willian´s ears. It was a talk that didn´t have any particular significance.

"Only wine from the south is good. However, the ones from Garius aren´t tasty. Why is it?"

"It should be something of their. They have the mentality of utilidy. They won´t improve the quality of their luxury products no matter what. They rely only on their imports for that."

Garius was a big country. It was the biggest kingdom in the world; there was nothing they couldn´t obtain. However, this would be accounted mostly for imports. It wasn´t like they were producing those products on their own.

""Conversation between drunktards. How boring.""

Willian slightly regretted listening to their conversation. That said, even if there was to be any proper conversation, it would still be meaningless. It wasn´t like Willian expecting much from it either though. The problem was that he was incredibly bored. It was to the point he could listen to such boring conversation…

“As to be expected of count Vrad´s knowledge.”

Willian immediately turned his face to them.

What entered in his sight was an elderly gentleman with a gentle face. He had a honest and gentle aura.

“Vraaaaaaaaaaaddddd!”

It was possible he had the same name. It wasn´t possible to think that man was that kind of person. Willian imagined him to be a more low-life, more vulgar type of person. But Willian´s instincts told him…

…That he was the man that stole his beloved sister.

In an instant, a vast amount of killing intent gushed out from him. Without laughing, the corpses started running amok, with anger in their faces. Kill, kill, kill, kill; the hatred, anger and despair coming from the sole of feet was tainting his mind. He would break that neck that still moved, gouge his eyeballs, smash his chin, slice off his nose, destroy his eardrums, crush his genitals underfoot. Willian was being overrun by the desire of wanting to torture him to death with all sorts of methods.

“!?”

Hilda and the others noticed his charge. Eahart and Baldias also turned their eyes to Willian´s direction. The hall which silence was something impossible before fell in a period of stillness.

“”Calm down, stupid me. There is no way I can do as I wish in this place.””

The silence let Willian recover his composure. However, it was already too late by that time. Many people were looking at Willian with faces that clearly had puzzled expressions on them.

“You bastard, what are you intending to do?”

The one standing in front of Willian was Gilberto. Hostility was clearly mixed in his gaze.

“What would you mean by asking me that? I cannot understand what you mean.”

Willian answered with a voice as clear as possible so that people could easily hear him.

“How shameless. What is the reason for you to have shown such vulgar display!? Answer me, you foreigner bastard!”

The killing intent became a sword and grazed at Willian. The aura Gilberto had was like a sharp blade. It was a sword that would protect its country, and also the symbol of his loyalty to the country as a noble. He was a noble to his bones.

“”That´s bad. Really… He caught me in such a bad time.””

It seemed that Gilberto didn´t have the intention to let Willian off.

“”How am I supposed to escape from this place…. It will be difficult, shit.””

The fact there were many talented people gathered at the place made it even more

difficult for Willian. It hadn´t been an amount of killing intent of the extent where he could fool them. One´s aura was one´s traits. Even if he was to say it wasn´t his, the people that could see it would immediately expose his lies.

“Willian!”

Karl tried to come towards him, but Hilda stopped him. The situation was too bad. It wasn´t like Willian had done anything in particular, but it was a fact that he had avoided the topic using an excuse. (TL note: I´m not sure about the translation there -.- ->特に何をしでかしたわけでもないが、ギルベルトに決定的な口実を与えたのは事実<- It might be “but it was a fact that he had given an excuse to Gilberto in his last efforts”, but I think the former makes more sense)

“Answer me. Depending on how you answer, the Osvalt family will do anything to eliminate you.”

Yes, even if Gilberto was not going to do something about Willian himself, he had enough influence to eliminate him. The family of a duke had this much power.

Sweat was running through his back. He was in a predicament. He was in a much more desperate situation than at the times he was at the battlefield.

“”….Hm?”

Nobody had noticed the thin mist surging at the feet´s height yet.

“”This… Could it be?””

Willian searched through his memory. This place shouldn´t have the requirements for mist to appear. Besides, it wasn´t natural that mist would collect by his feet. In that

case….

“”…Fuh, it seems my luck is really good.””

The source of the mist. Willian thanked those people that were supposed to be there. Willian showed a smile.

“Why are you smiling? Are you belittling of the Osvalt family?”

“How could I. I was only surprised how let alone the common nobles, even sir Gilberto hadn´t noticed what is happening.”

“Noticed? Noticed what?”

Gilberto showed a puzzled face. Willian smiled.

“We have a visitor. An uninvited guest, if you may.”

Then, he turned his eyes to [there].

[][]

A dance party for Willian

Everyone present in the hall noticed the abnormality once the mist reached to the height of the knees. The mist was tasteless and odorless, and it probably wasn´t poison or something of the sort. The mist was simply… for concealment.

“What is this, you bastard.”

Gilberto asked Willian. Willian ignored him and started acting.

If one was to ask what he was intending to do, it would be that he was going to provide his assistance. If Willian was able to do well, this predicament would instead turn into good fortune for him.

“Karl, protect his Highness. Don´t let them pass through even if you are to die.”

In a few words, Karl also made his move. He didn´t understand the meaning behind those orders, but it was his obedience and honesty to move as he was commanded that had let him rise up to where he stood today. The undefeated Karl´s ten-man squad was made up by that mindset.

“Willian, what are you going to do?”

Willian answered with a smile to Karl´s question.

“I… will go hunting, you see.”

Willian took a tableware knife, doing one turn with it in his hand. The only one that had

a sword here was Eahart, the prince. If it became that he had to use it, it would be checkmate at that time. There would be no future for the people of the military that were not able to protect the prince. However, if they are able to…. There wouldn´t be better reward than that.

The mist thickened. Screams of the noble ladies echoed through the hall by the time the mist was covering half the body. Including Karl, all the skilled warriors were protecting the prince and the noblewomen. They were completely defended.

“”In that case, the target shouldn´t be the prince.””

In such situation, it was only Willian that didn´t focus on protecting the prince. There was nobody that would be so idiot as to aim for someone that was being so much protected. On the contrary, it was natural for one to think the target was someone else. But it wasn´t because of that that it would be fine to leave the prince on his own. However, with this rightful role being taken up by Karl, this part was settled up.

The mist completely covered the place. The line-of-sight was obstructed.

“”I need to cover for my bad impression from before for as much as I can.””

An evening suit and a knife. Willian wasn´t in a position where he could really attack someone. However, this was just enough…

To deal with them…

“They are coming! Don´t let even a single ant go through!”

“Ou!”

Even if the assassins were skillful…

“First.”

…Willian was far more outstanding.

Blood flew. To Willian, it would be the true dance party from now on.

Inside the mist, people couldn´t see. Only Willian was able to freely move around. Even for the people that could feel aura, they woulnd´t be able to move naturally like that. However, it was different for Willian. It was exactly because he was crooked if by military standards that he was capable in a more variety of things. The amount of knowledge he had compared to the people that would only train for the battlefield just wasn´t the same.

Willian´s five senses were sharpened to be much more keen than they were before. It wasn´t like he would simply became stronger by wrapping his aura around his body. His five sense became sharper, more profound and more extensive.

“Second.”

If your eyes can´t see, you can just listen with your ears.

The knife Willian held slit through the neck of an assassin in a straight movement. The instant this knife that would usually be used in a gentle, beautiful, nimble, and also casual manner was used by Willian, the knife was immediately turned into an excellent blade.

“Third, fourth.”

If your eyes can´t see, you can just smell with your nose.

Willian was dancing. Nobody was watching him; his audience consisted only by the masked assassins in front of his eyes.

In such predicament, the ones that were the most perplexed were nobody else other than the assassins. Their plan had been perfectly arranged. There wasn´t supposed to be any obstacles in between their objective, and even if there was any, all the people there would be unarmed. The assassins were armed, and moreover, they were specially trained so that they could see even inside the mist. There was no way they would be in the disadvantage.

“Fifth!”

If the eyes can´t see, you can feel with your skin.

However, at the moment, a single monster dominated the place. Even if they were to face him, all it would happen was that the amount of corpses would increase. The assassins decided to change their plans.

“”So they scattered around… Who is their target?””

They changed their strategy and started to ignore Willian, taking the roundabout way so that they could kill their target. They were too late to react, but Willian´s existence was something too much outside of expectations. They had stolen away the most important sense out of the five senses. Who would have thought there would be someone that wouldn´t suffer from that.

“”For now, let´s go for the sixth!””

Willian threw his knife. It pierced through the temple of the assassin´s forehead just like as if it had been an arrow. Once again, another life was immediately reaped.

“”Four small fries remaining. My two preys… Ah, how unfortunate. They got too close to them.””

The one assassin that came too near to the prince became victim to Baldias´ mighty arm. Because of how strong he was, the assassin´s spine was broken. In the time the assassin was writhing in the ground, Baldias crushed him with his big foot. The other one was hit at the chin Gilberto and lost his consciousness, soon to be assaulted with kicks by Hilda, Anzerm and Gregour, having his life pulverized. (TL note:I´m not sure what this means ->顎をこすり上げ意識を落とし<- I couldn´t find anything on the internet… Although I don´t know what Gilberto really did, he probably hit the chin of the assassin one way or another. I´m also assuming that the assassin lost consciousness because of how it was written. I never saw it being written like that, and I didn´t find anything about it either, so I gave up looking for it ‘ 3’)

““They can really do well. So the little young masters weren´t just talk?””

As Willian was thinking that, he took the life of his seventh victim. Not picking up the knife he threw, he used another knife from the many knives that were on the table, and passing by the side of the assassin at close range, Willian pierced the knife through the back of the assassin´s head.

“”One remaining!””

However, the last person was clearly different from the other ones.

“”That´s some really good moves, hey.””

It was swift, and also flexible. Moreover, differently from the other nine assassins that would move like dolls for the sake of completing their mission, intelligence could be felt from his moves.

“”He is avoiding me… He is not going towards the prince. Where is he going to? Who is the target!?””

The assassin was moving in a way Willian couldn´t guess the target. He erased his presence inside the crowd of people like a thief; his movement was without faults.

“”Not much sound. The smell too; a perfume suitable to the place. Hah, it looks like I will lose track of him.””

The flawless assassin; the last remaining one. Willian was eager to hunt him down, no matter what. However, Willian was about to lose track of him. Thorough technique; quiet footsteps and smell that let him cloaked himself into the surroundings.

However…

“”He is leaking his killing intent! Did he find his target and became too hasty!?”

Willian was guided by the killing intent of the assassin he had lost track of. He barely made it in time.

The mist started to grow dim.

“I fooooound youuuu!”

Willian got in between who probably was the assassin´s target. Willian was right in front of the assassin. The assassin was using something similar to a knife. Compared to that, Willian was using a tableware knife.

“Don´t, get in my way.”

The assassin said in a voice louder than expected. The assassin readied his weapon.

Willian thrust through the gap in the assassin´s movements, having his knife slip through the assasin´s defenses. The assassin twisted his body and nimbly avoided the attack. At the same time Willian was suprised by the flexibility of the assassin, the assassin´s knife was being aimed at Willian´s throat from an unbelievable angle.

“”This guy… is strong!””

There was no sound in those movements. The unnatural movements were made naturally. Differently from the strength of the strong, those movements were like the apex of the strength of the weak. It was the lack of the faults of the valor in military arts that made it the most problematic.

“This guy; I will kill!”

Willian felt goosebumps. He had never felt this much killing intent; never had felt such blade of killing intent with such resolute aim. No matter how much the assassin hated the person behind him, Willian didn´t think he would be able to display this much pressure.

“Fuh.”

Exhaustion.

“Hyu”(ひゅ)

Nimble movements the whole body jumped about like a spring. Those weren´t maneuvers that were made for aiming for openings, but ones that were done for creating openings. The opponent wasn´t a warrior at all; he could only be seen as an assassin. (TL note: ->からの全身がばねの様に弾むしなやかな動き<- I´m not sure what ->から<- is. It is not written in kanji, so I can´t really search for it… ¬¬)

“”Those moves… Could it be?””

It was because Willian was familiar with those moves that he didn´t let any gaps appear. He followed the movements of the assassin with his knife. The assassin once again swung the knife, aiming for Willian´s life.

Both knives clashed.

“Th-is… How could this be?”

The mask of the assassin cracked. What appeared behind the mask was a beautiful dark brown-skinned girl. She was one of Willian´s only two childhood friends, Havella.

“This is my lin…. !?”

Willian noticed the identity of the person he was protecting. The identity of person behind him; the target of today´s assassination. He also noticed the reason for Havella to have joined in. There could be no reason other than that. It couldn´t be anyone other that person.

Willian glanced behind him. It was difficult to look through the mist, but there was no mistake, nor did it seem like there would be. The figure of the man that was burned in his eyes moments ago was before him.

“”So it is like that.””

Willian didn´t know the details, but it seemed that Havella knew that count Vrad, who was the killer of his elder sister, would come to this place, and probably because there was a request for his assassination to begin with, Havella took advantage of it and hoped on. With how Vrad had done those things with Arlette and many others, he should have taken enmity of as many people as there could have. It wasn´t strange that there would be an assassination request for him at the assassin´s guild. It also made sense that Havella would take part on it.

“”We agreed we would do it with the three of us together…. Stupid””

It wasn´t like that anymore. Their daily lives wouldn´t traverse each other anymore. There were parts about it that Kail somewhat already guessed, but Havella seemed to still not be able to understand it. It was because of that that this kind of incident where there was lack of communication could so easily end up happening.

Willian pulled Havella´s confused face towards him.

“Run away to that same place. We will kill him together later.”

Those words were whispered in a gentle voice, but they were more akin an order. They could understand each other just by looking at each other´s eyes. Those eyes told Havela how much Willian was angry right now to the point it hurted.

It was an instant. The instant Willian released his hand, Havella ran away, making use of the mist. Her feet were fast and soundless. Now that the mist was thin, Havella was making use of the darkness of the night.

And by the time the mist cleared up for the most part and commotion started over the gruesome sight at the surroundings….

“You… must be the White Mask, right?”

Vrad spoke to Willian. To Vrad, Willian was his savior. No, the same could be said to the other people. He was the hero that warded off the assassins. More so than the indescribable mood in the hall was his achievements. The achievement of having protected them and the achievement of having killed most of the assassins was more than enough proof to indicate he wasn´t thinking of doing anything bad to the people of this place.

Willian touched his own face. Seeming that both masks had been destroyed at that same time, it was on the floor, broken. He was standing there with his own face. It should be fine like that. Strictly speaking, [this] wasn´t his own path, but the path of vengeance of [Al], who was inside him. There wouldn´t be meaning to it if he wasn´t there with his own face.

“Yes, count Vrad. I am the White Mask, Willian Rivius. Pleased to make your acquaintance, count.”

This was his declaration of war. It was something that had been left undone by himself, the White Retaliator. It was going to be his first revenge and it would be his last. Vrad was his target. Originally, the brother and sister had very similar appearances. They used to have the same hair color, same eyes; he used to be a gentle and mild boy. Perhaps Vrad would have recognized him if it was the him of that time. It was also possible that he wouldn´t have remembered about someone of the likes of a slave however.

“Thank you, Willian-kun. You are my benefactor.”

Vrad extended his hand to Willian, commoved. Willian gladly accepted the handshake.

Willian was different now. With the death of that gentle and little boy from that time, his hair became white and he came to carry bottomless amounts of despair. Using his hatred as the White Retaliator as a source of motivation for an amount of effort that couldn´t be counted as average, he obtained knowledge and strength. He came to understand karma and made his resolve to build a big tower.

Because of that, Vrad was already just triviality. Willian wouldn´t fuss over someone as little as a count. Compared to the height he aimed for, how tiny was Vrad. But even so, it was necessary that he put it to an end. Even if this was something trivial to Willian, this was everything to [Al]. Now that he accepted [Al] as part of himself, he should at least satisfy him a bit.

“This wasn´t anything, count.”

And because of that, Willian gave Vrad the greatest of smiles.

The despair he felt at that day… He would give him back ten times the amount. That smile was like a silent declaration.

(TL note: Thank god Willian didn´t end up killing Havella 0.0)

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A man becoming of the moon

The hall quieted down. The mist cleared up and the nine dead bodies were being taken away from the place. Nobody was paying attention to that gruesome sight. As if such thing wasn´t even entering their sights, their eyes were focused at only one place.

At the handsome face that was behind the white mask.

The white hair that even almost seemed translucent reflected the light of the candle stands, giving off a red shadow. Those eyes that had wisdom deepened his impression much more than when he was wearing a mask. The lump of rationality his body was with the elimination of any pointlessness in his training had a tender form and made people long for it.

It was a man becoming of the night. A man becoming of the moon. If one was to meet him under the moonlight, one would caught one´s breath by his [beauty]. The moon attracted people.

He was a man that was like the moon.

"…Karl-sama, due to my negligence, I have ended up letting one escape. Now, I will go track the assassin down, so please leave this matter to me."

Word by word, the view was turning into a picture. Most of the people at the place didn´t even have recollections of what happened before. Not only that, the impression they had of Willian itself became entirely different. Having been painted into something else, the past wouldn´t surface in their minds at all. They were completely filled by Willian´s charm now that he was unleashed from his mask.

"Take care, ok!"

The only one calm was Karl, who had become used to it after seeing Willian regularly. Even Eahart and Baldias didn´t expect that a man of such charm would come out under that mask.

“I see. This acting really does its effect.”

Eahart was impressed. The strong image Willian had implanted in the people and his fascinating impression came about only because he would usually hide himself under the mask. Whether he was an ugly man, whether he was a handsome man; he would be leading people astray, would be bewildering them. The white mask would incite people´s interest.

It was because he had confidence in himself that the act of hiding his face had better effect. It was a cycle made for charming people. Both the people that saw what he was like under his mask and the people that didn´t became more interested in him the more they came to know about him. They were interested in the man named Willian Rivius. (TL note: Not sure what this was supposed to mean ->これは人を惹き付けるためのセルフプロデュース<- What is this supposed to mean ->セルフプロデュース<- Self-produce? ¬¬ Even for the english words, you are pretty much learning a completely different language -.- I used “cycle” by guessing from the context. Maybe the “self-produce” is about Willians own “charm” doing something by itself and producing something (interest?))

“Willian…sama.”

It was only the people that stood in the light…. (TL note: Too vague ;-; I´m not sure what the author meant by that ->輝きの中にいるものですら——<-)

By the time Willian had already gone out from Baldias´ residence to pursue the one assassin he had let escape, the princesses and the noblewomen had all been temporarily evacuated to another room, and Hilda and the others were working on sorting out the aftermath.

“So a tableware knife can deal such injuries… That´s really impressive.”

Anzerm let out a voice of praise. Hilda, who was in a bad mood, also couldn´t help but nod at that. If someone was to ask her if she could do this feat with that sort of knife, she would have to say she couldn´t. She wouldn´t be able to move like Willian once her vision was denied from her to begin with. It was because she couldn´t do that that she devoted herself to the defense of the party members, but…

“But really, to think he could move like that inside that mist.”

Gregour was surprised that Willian was capable of moving around like that to that extent. Gregour´s sight was completely gone once the mist thickened, so no matter how strong he was, he wasn´t in a situation he could make use of his strength. It took his all just to keep guard. To Gregour, who was a warrior, it was obvious that he would see Willian in a good light with how he was capable of assaulting the assassins by himself inside that mist.

“So this is the rumoured white mask.”

“To think he would be able to defeat seven people by himself… It is vexing, but I cannot help but commend him.”

“That Karl got a great pick-up.”

The other centurions were surprised by the number seven of the people Willian killed. It was easy to understand what that number meant. Inside that mist, Willian overturned the advantage of the assassins that were used to the darkness. If someone was to ask them whether they could do the same, they couldn´t answer in any way other than that they could not. To begin with, there was no way that they would be able protect count Vrad, who was the one being targeted, if it had been by themselves.

“...Hmph.”

Gilberto snorted. Perhaps Willian had intended to make it through his predicament, but Gilberto´s senses weren´t rusty to the point he wouldn´t know that the killing intent from before that was clearly being pointed to someone of the party. What happened was that Willian was lucky to have the assassins invade at that time. Gilberto believed that in his mind, and also believed this was a big chance.

“How scary.”

Hilda ended up leaking her real thoughts with those words. Much more than the sharpness in the injuries of the assassins, much more than the fact he was able to move despite having his vision hindered, and much more than how he dealt with seven of the assassins, it was his standing figure in those last moments that was etched in her eyes; that white handsome man that appeared from inside the mist.

“What is scary?”

It wasn´t only his appearance that was beautiful. There was his aura too. A darkness that felt like it would engulf everything, and an unknown certain something that was bottomless. At the same time humans feared the darkness, they also had the trait of being attracted by it. For what there was for Willian´s darkness, his strength also wasn´t any less bewildering. From now on, the number of people that would get attracted by him will definitely increase. That was what it was scary.

“Haven´t you started getting cocky now that you´ve become a knight, you green horn?”

“Ouch, ouch, ouch! Don´t pull my cheeks!”

Whether this kingdom would be wrapped up by the curtains of the night; it was so scary it couldn´t be helped.

[][]

The strongest appears

The capital of Arcadia, Arkas. It wasn´t the most outstanding capital among the seven kingdoms, but there were only a few people in the whole world that would say it wasn´t a great capital. The for being able to hold such a big amount of people and its productivity as a capital could only be said to be something that could only be expected from one of the seven kingdoms. However, it was because it was so big that there was unsightly things, and also people hiding in places that was difficult to find in this kingdom.

"!?"

Lurking around Havella were the people that lived at this dark side. All of them were using the same uniform. They had masks on their faces, so their expressions couldn´t be guessed. What filled the place was an inorganic killing intent. Seeing they came to that place, Havella wielded her knife.

"An assassin that fails in killing is not an assassin."

"Death to the one that isn´t an assassin any longer."

"This one must die."

There wasn´t anger, nor sadness, nor happiness, nor anything at all. They were existences that were made only to kill people. Those were the assassins that were members of the assassin´s guild. All the people were lacking any kind of emotion.

"…I can´t die. I still, can´t…"

The one f with emotions nobody else other than Havella. Even though she was normally an expressionless girl, there were many emotions jumbled together that simply wasn´t shown in her expression. She didn´t know how she was supposed to express them. Those emotions even without her expressing it in her face to begin with, so she didn´t care.

“The three of us, I will live together with them!”

The three of them: Al, Kail and Havella. They were connected.

“That one must die.”

One of the assassins jumped in front of Havella. Havella readied herself for battle.

“Sh!”(しっ！)

Havella skillfully handled her knife. If it is of the level of the opponent right in front of her, then she should be able to cut through. Actually, once they started crossing their blades, it was Havella that was at the advantage. However…

“This one must die.”

With two of them…

“Not yet!”

Taking on two opponents, it became a balanced fight. Havella´s movement wasn´t limited to just being nimble. Gravity not being felt in her moves would be an accurate

description of it. But even so….

“You will die.”

With three of them…

“Gh!?”(ぐっ！？)

Havella was kicked from behind and fell down. Havella moved around like a butterfly, but once she was caught, all was to no use.

“You will die.”

Without unnecessary movements and without even an instant of hesitation, the knife covered in poison approached her throat. It was a deadly poison that would immediately kill by a single scratch. Without pain or agony, Havella was now going to….

“Sorry, Al, Kail.”

And so those were Havella´s last moments….

“Really…. If you were going to apologize, you should have done it right from the beginning.”

The three assassins that were fighting Havella. At that same time, their torsos were cut off. The wound was brutal; their organs were thrown out to the surroundings. The one to have set up that display was…

“…Kail.”

“I will scold you later. Now, about you guys…. Go die.”

Kail, Havella´s and Al´s childhood friends, and also a man that lived as a gladiator.

An assassin lurked from behind Kail without giving off any presence. Against such move, Kail casually hit him with a back fist strike. With only that, the head of the assassin was burst open. The head that was blown away had its mask broken in pieces. The face was caved-in to the point one wouldn´t make out how it used to be from it.

“!?”

The emotionless assassins.

“You better run. Right now, I… won´t be able to stop [myself].”

The aura of a strong person was gushed out. A thick scent of death of the extent that even the assassins that were supposed to be emotionless couldn´t approach. No matter how many assassins were to attack at once, they wouldn´t be able to live. The absolute power was standing there.

“Sorry there.”

The strongest moved. He grabbed the head of an assassin and crushed it in his hand. There was no need to use his weapon to fight off small fry. With only his physical strength, it was enough to trample them down. His fist pierced through the stomach of one of the assassins. Doing so, he took hold of the assassin´s movement by grabbing his

spine. The assassin who was caught was then finished off by another strike.

“Ru-run away!”

The assassins that were supposed to not have any emotions. How much training and how many experiences did they have to go through for that sake? They had the confidence and the resolve to not be shaken even if death was in front of them. However…

“Run away by all means. I won´t go follow after you once you escape.”

The scenery the monster in front of their eyes brought forward would easily blow away something as trifle as resolve. Here was the capital of Arkas. Even if they were at a place people wouldn´t pass by, there was human activity just one street away. Even behind the scenes there wouldn´t such repulsive display brought about by this hell.

The escaping assassins. Kail didn´t do any effort to follow them.

“Hah, hah, hah, al-alright, I surviv… Hya!?”

For some reason, in their path of retreat…

“There was no way I would let you escape, retard!”

The path had already been blocked. The heads of the assassins flew. What shone was a silvery sword.

“I will start it by killing all of you. You can start babbling all you want then.”

It was a man wearing a cheap-looking wig and using a mask he had bought without much thought at some stall around there. The image of corpses were leaking out from the man. All the assassins that were standing before him understood.

They weren´t going to escape.

“”Die””

Blood flew to the air mercilessly.

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